A Semiotics of Opera

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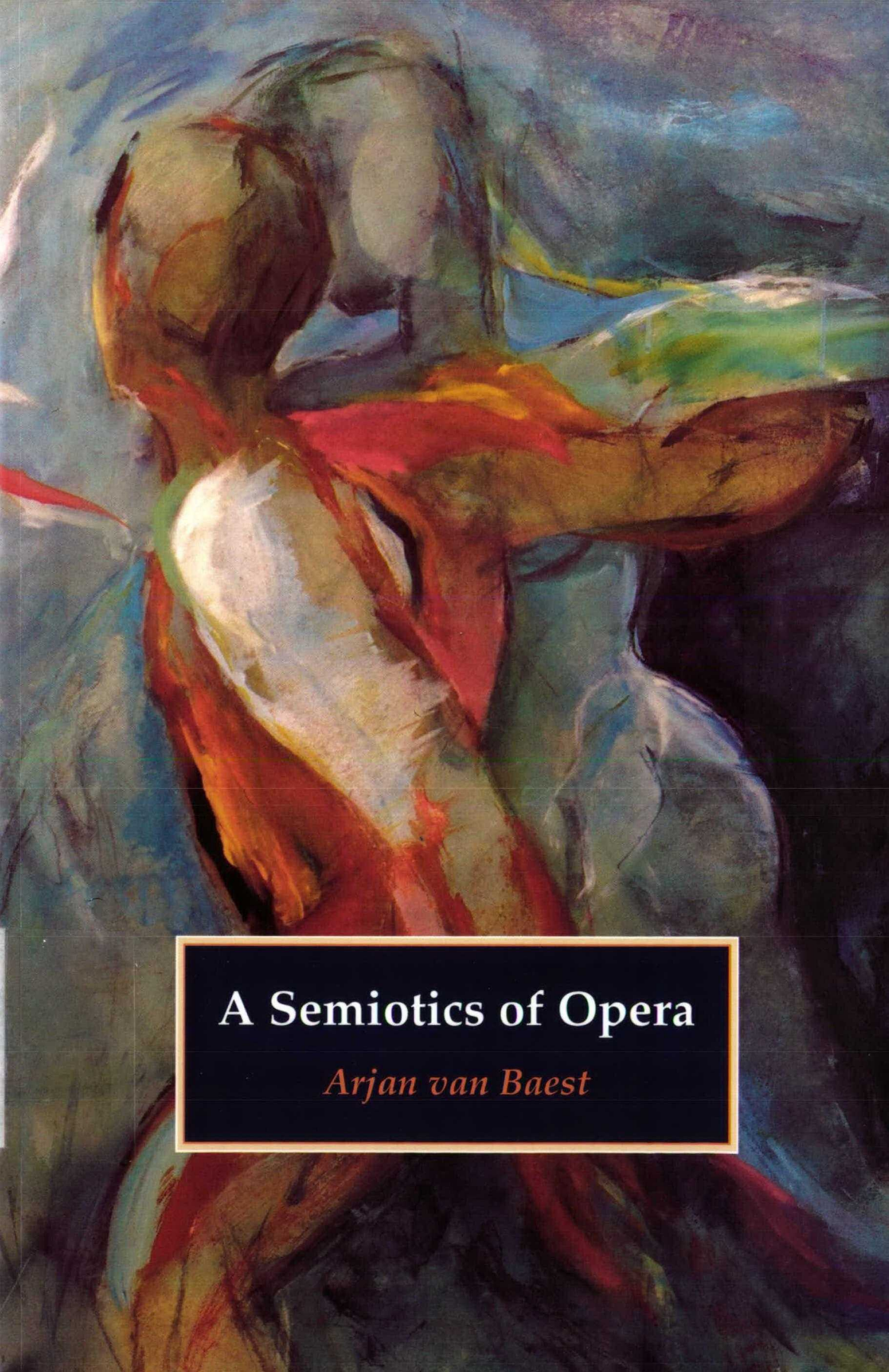

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Arjan van Baest

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My parents supported and encouraged me in the choices I made. They have been (and still are) wonderful parents; to them I dedicate this book.

Judith is my life.

Tilburg, April 2000
Arjan van Baest

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Music and meaning

Does music have meaning? Had we asked this question to any seventeenth century educated individual, it would be likely that he would have answered our question with a frown; furthermore, he would have had serious doubts about our intellect, and he would have walked off in a hurry, leaving our question unanswered and providing us with one more puzzling question: why did he react in such a way? He did so because in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the age of the Baroque, everything was considered meaningful, and music was no exception to this rule. This was a result of the influence of rhetoric and the theory of affects. Seventeenth century education was imbued with them, and accordingly they were firmly grounded in different aspects of life. What were rhetoric and the theory of affects about and how did they influence the music of that time?

The theory of affects was not an invention of the seventeenth century. The word 'affect' is derived from the Latin 'afficere', which means 'to cause': an affect is something to which someone is subject. This idea was already dealt with by Aristotle. He defined affect as a mechanical movement of the soul which is caused by an external force. We are not dealing with metaphorical language here: the movement as dealt with by Aristotle is a literal movement, the external force literally moves us. The baroque theory of affects is a combination of Aristotle's theory and the theory of the four temperaments as outlined by Hippocrates in about 460 B.C. According to Hippocrates, the human body contains four vital juices: phlegm, blood, yellow bile and black bile. Those vital juices bring about the four temperaments: if phlegm dominates, it leads to phlegmatism or apathy; a surplus of blood leads to sanguinism or passion; too much yellow bile makes you hot-tempered or choleric, whereas black bile leads to a state of melancholy. Normally speaking, the four vital juices are in equilibrium. However, under the influence of external forces the vital juices can increase and rise to the brains. The juice which reaches the brains first leads to a particular mood.

What is the relevance of the theory of affects to music? According to Johann Mattheson, the writer of *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister* (1739), morality cannot exist without affects. It is the musician's task to control the negative affects and to stimulate the positive affects. Negative affects are only al-

lowed if they can stimulate the listener to virtuousness. To be able to control the affects to this purpose, the musician must be aware of the physical working of the affects. For example, the affect of 'hope' is a literal elevation of the spirit, whereas 'despair' is its opposite: when in despair, the spirit literally crashes. The musician must take this literal working into account when exercising his profession: if he wants to express 'hope' the music must rise, if he wants to express 'despair' the music must fall.

To treat the affects well in music, music was subject to the laws of rhetoric (which was originally designed for oral speech). Rhetoric, the historical lines of which go back to Quintillion and other classical thinkers, was considered as the base for the structure of musical composition. The rhetorical process consisted of five stages: inventio, or how to find the ideas; dispositio, or how to sequence those ideas in such a way that the central idea and the required effect are served best; elaboratio, filling out the details, elaborating themes and the use of tropes; memoria, learning the musical oration by heart; and actio, rehearsing the oration with supporting gestures (see Ueding, 1986 and Grout & Palisca, 1994:328/329). The latter two stages apply more to the performing musician than do the first three stages, which deal with the process of composing. Let us consider an example of one of those five stages, the stage of elaboratio. In the case of a text-based composition (for example an opera, cantata or *Lied*), the stage of elaboration determined the way in which standard tropes could be used to stress particular elements of the text, such as a question, an exclamation, or elements which express certain qualities like 'to rise' and 'to fall'. In this way a whole range of tropes was developed which could express all possible affects. Two prototypical tropes are the anabasis and its opposite the katabasis. The first trope expresses words or ideas which are connected with the concept of rising, whereas the katabasis expresses words or ideas which are connected with the concept of falling. When Picander writes in his libretto to the *Matthäus Passion* 'So steig herab from Kreuz', Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) writes according to the rules of rhetoric and *Affektenlehre* a falling musical motive, a katabasis which literally expresses Christ's descending the cross (figure 1.1):

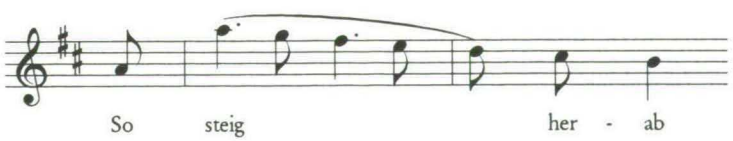

Figure 1.1

The opposite occurs as well: a rising anabasis motive is set to the text 'Ich will nach dreien Tagen wieder auferstehen'. This motive expresses very literally Christ's resurrection (figure 1.2):

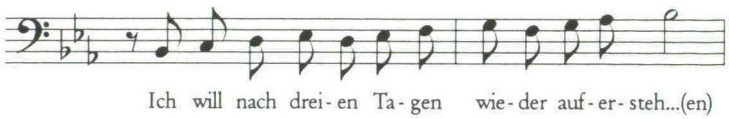

Figure 1.2

A vast range of musical tropes existed to express affects. Expressing affects according to the principles of rhetoric was the most important principle of composition, for both vocal and instrumental music.

The idea that music was capable of influencing people was not typically baroque. It is assumed that in the very first beginning, in our prehistory, music was considered as a divine or a magical power. Music had a ritual function then; it could conciliate the gods, keep away the demons and cure the ill. A similar conception regarding the influence of music on human beings can be found with the ancient Chinese. Chinese music is pentatonic, which means that it is based on five tones. These tones incorporated the Chinese world view. The five notes not only referred to the planets Saturn, Venus, Jupiter, Mars and Mercury, but also to the colors yellow, white, blue, red and black, as well as to the cycle of life. And it was Confucius who said: 'If you want to know whether a country is well governed, listen to its music'. The ancient Greek would fully agree. Music was one of the most important elements of Greek education. In Sparta and Athens, playing the aulos (a kind of flute) as well as singing in the choir were compulsory. Elementary to the musical conception of the ancient Greek was the connection which was made between particular modes and human characteristics. In this light Plato defends the importance of music for education and thus for maintaining the state. He characterizes the dorian mode as being manly, brave and balanced; the phrygian mode is wild, passionate and incites to heroic achievements, whereas he characterizes the lydian mode as the mode of complaint, intimacy and charm. Because of its 'weak' characteristics, Plato considers only the dorian and the phrygian mode suitable for education, for only those modes can maintain the state.

Although expressing emotions or affects in music has played a role in musical theory as well as in musical practice ever since the ancient civilizations, particularly near the end of the sixteenth century, the period of renaissance, it was the subject of sometimes wild experiments within the realms of

profane music. Religious music from this period was far less the object of such experiments, for this kind of music was under control of the Church, which imposed rigid rules on music which was written for liturgical purposes. Liturgical music— the term can be used here as a synonym for religious music, for the bulk of religious music written in this period was meant to be used within liturgy— had to direct all attention towards its text. Any use of expressive music was prohibited, for it implied a subjective and thus false interpretation of the text. As a result of this rule, religious music from the renaissance can be characterized as somewhat objective and distant, at least when compared to the genre of the profane madrigal that existed parallel to its religious counterpart. Being profane, the madrigal was not subject to the rules of the church, so it was mainly this genre which was the object of experiments with the expressive abilities of music. Famous composers who contributed to the genre and the experiment were, among others, Carlo Gesualdo di Venosa (1560-1613) and Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). Both composers pursued a new musical language which made the expression of emotions, as described in, or evoked by the text, its core characteristic. Monteverdi called the new style which emerged from this expressive experiment *seconda prattica*, whereas he reserved the term *prima prattica* for the traditional counterpoint style of renaissance polyphony. The new musical language in which the text dominates the music played an important role in the genesis of opera, which came into being around 1600.

In the seventeenth century, the period of the Baroque, music was considered as a language with a very definite function: music had to communicate affects in order to develop the listener's morality. Precisely this communicated affect was the meaning of music, thereby defining the concept of musical meaning in terms of referential power. This conception of meaning was not restricted to music, but it applied to all arts. Art was imitation '— but an imitation which is only instrumental toward producing effects upon an audience' (Abrams, 1979:14). Imitation was common to all arts; they only differed by imitating using different media. This view of the nature of art in general has been 'the principal aesthetic attitude of the Western world' (ibidem, 21) from Horace through the eighteenth century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, the artist as an individual became more and more important: 'Gradually [...] the stress was shifted more and more to the poet's natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity, at the expense of the opposing attributes of judgment, learning, and artful restraints' (ibidem). In the nineteenth century, the old idea of imitation had to make room for a new conception of imitation: no longer did art have to imitate the external world, but it was a vehicle for making the internal external. 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', Wordsworth wrote, and Liszt

considered music as the embodied essence of feeling (see Grout & Palisca, 1994:617).

In the nineteenth century, the romantic era, the problem of musical reference lead to a controversy regarding the nature of music. In Germany, two opposing movements emerged from this controversy: the Neudeutsche Schule and the movement of romantic classicism. The Neudeutsche Schule, lead by composers like Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883), aimed at a new music, a music which ought to have substance and which ought to be able to tell a story— which means that it had to be able to refer to extra-musical elements. In the eyes of these composers the aesthetical aspect of music depended on its substance and its ability to express extra-musical elements. Music had to imitate— not the 'real' world, but the composer's inner feelings about the external world. Under influence of these new musical aesthetics, a new genre came into being in the nineteenth century: the genre of the symphonic poem, in which a story is told without using words. Of this new genre in particular and the new music to which this genre belonged in general, Richard Strauss (1864-1949), one of the most important composers of symphonic poems, once said that he could even express a glass of beer in music. On the other hand, the composers of the movement which can be called romantic classicism, one of them was Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), aimed at an equilibrium between form and substance. Although they did not reject the idea of musical substance, the primary interest of the romantic classicists was the aspect of form. According to them, musical beauty depended more on the formal aspect of music than on the expression of extra-musical substance. The formal principles of the classical period in general and the great classical composers Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven served as a model for the compositions of the romantic classicists.

The opposition between the two German romantic movements shows a clear dichotomy in reflecting on the subject of music and meaning: one movement stresses the importance of substance, whereas the other focusses on the formal aspect of music. This opposition did not cease to exist with the turn of the century, on the contrary: in our day, a lack of consensus regarding the issue of music and meaning still exists. In fact, there is not even consensus about the question whether music can have meaning. It is exactly this point which has given rise to a controversy that focusses on the question whether or not music can refer to extra-musical phenomena. Within this controversy, two extreme positions can be discerned. According to the one extreme, music cannot refer to extra-musical phenomena; this is the autonomists' point of view, which is related to Hanslick's nineteenth century polemic *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (Hanslick, 1891). In this polemic, Hanslick, one of the principal spokesmen of romantic classicism, argues that the essence

of music is not the expression of feelings, as was generally assumed in the romantic period, but its form; music 'consists wholly of sounds artistically combined' (ibidem:66). According to the other extreme, music is a communicative language which always refers to extra-musical phenomena; this is the referentialists' point of view. The discussion about autonomy versus referentiality is dealt with more explicitly by Leonard B. Meyer in his book *Emotions and Meaning in Music* (Meyer, 1956). Meyer considers musical meaning as embodied meaning: the stimulus and what it refers to are of the same kind. This does not mean that the meaning of music is limited to relations within one composition: musical meaning depends on relations with compositions previously heard as well. Meyer's position holds the middle ground between the two extreme opinions of autonomy on the one hand and referentiality on the other. And indeed, something can be said for both opinions. When listening to music, it is possible that people do relate certain musical phenomena to extra-musical objects (cf. Karbusicky, 1986). On the other hand, they do not have to do so, for it is possible to listen to music as an autonomous structure without relating its formal aspects to extra-musical objects. In other words: music does not force you to be an autonomist or a referentialist, but allows you to hold either one (or both) of these views. So, when Igor Stravinsky says that 'music is, by its very nature, powerless to express anything at all' (in: White, 1979: 566), he is just as right or wrong as Deryk Cooke when he presents his musical vocabulary in which specific musical motives are related to specific emotions (Cooke, 1978). Realizing this, it must be admitted that the twentieth century discussion regarding music and meaning has grown into a pointless impasse. This impasse is rooted in a modernist orientation in which 'music' and 'meaning' are looked upon as independently existing elements. However, 'music' and 'meaning' are not just elements or things; above all, they are human activities. This is the reason that the question regarding music and meaning has to be reduced to its origin: the active human being. Human beings make music, human beings relate music to their world, human beings signify. The question as to how they do so or what the nature of these processes is, is a semiotic question. A semiotic approach, therefore, can break the impasse. Semiotics does not concentrate on traditional questions like 'Does music have meaning?' and 'What does music mean?', this is the modernist approach, but it deals with the problem of music and meaning from a different angle: given the fact that human beings do relate particular musical structures to particular objects, the signification processes which underlie this assignment of musical elements to particular objects, whether it concerns musical objects or non-musical objects, should be the object of research. In our book *The Semiotics of C.S. Peirce Applied to Music: A Matter of Belief* (Van Baest & Van Driel, 1995), Hans van Driel and I have shown that the semiotics of

the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) provides a solid basis for such an analysis of musical signification processes. The present study is built on the fundaments as outlined in *A Matter of Belief*. That publication mainly was an inquiry into a Peircean semiotics of music. The ideas as presented there will be further developed to suit a more complex musical form, a form in which the music enters into a function with a text: the opera.

A short history of opera

In 1600, on the occasion of the wedding of Henry IV of France and Maria de'Medici, a pastoral play was performed which was to have a great impact on the history of western music. The title of this music drama was *Euridice*, and its creators were Ottavio Rinuccini, who wrote the text, and Jacopo Peri, the composer of the music. Rinuccini and Peri's music drama was a successful attempt by a group of Florentine humanists to embody their ideas regarding music and poetry. This group was called the Camerata. In their meetings, the members of the Camerata discussed the state of art. They turned away from the counterpoint style of renaissance polyphony, which they considered not suitable for giving room for emotions, individuality and subjectivity. Instead of this objective style, the Camerata aimed at a style in which music could express the passions and moods of the text as precisely as possible. This new style was embodied in a new musical technique of putting words to music, called *stile rappresentativo*. It was based on the monodic style of ancient Greek music. According to the Camerata, the secret of this Greek music was its perfect union of word and music, which the Camerata thought was the result of the dominance of the word over the music. Taking logocentrism as a starting principle, three points were made:

1. The text must be intelligible. It has to be performed by a soloist with a minimal and very sober accompaniment. A polyphonic style was not allowed, for polyphony only aroused confusion because different words are heard at the same time in different rhythms sung by different voices;
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if spoken. This claim could prevent the use of popular dancy meters as well as needless repetitions of text fragments as they occurred frequently in polyphonic motets and madrigals;
3. The music should not merely depict graphical details of the text; instead, it should interpret the emotional substance of an entire passage by imitating and intensifying inflections and accents as they appear when someone

articulates the text under influence of the emotions which the text arouses.

Euridice is written in the stile rappresentativo, although not completely. Each of the five scenes of the opera is concluded with a chorus, the musical style of which is closely related to renaissance madrigal; now and then the recitative is interrupted by songlike forms, whereas in the opera's finale a 'Ritornello strumentale' occurs. However, the greater part of *Euridice* is written in the new style. Euridice is the earliest opera of which the music has survived. Being one of the first operas ever, *Euridice* marks the beginning of a new era in the history of music.

In 1607, seven years after *Euridice*, what is considered the first 'mature' opera was written: *Orfeo*, music by Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) on a libretto by Alessandro Striggio. Monteverdi worked as maestro di cappella at the San Marco in Venice. Here he worked closely together with the librettist Giacomo Badoaro. One of the results of their cooperation was *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1641). In those days, opera was a very popular genre in Venice. Its success was an immediate result of the growing number of public opera houses which were built there: during the period from 1637 to 1700 no less than 16 opera theaters had been built in Venice. As a result of this development, opera was no longer a privilege for the aristocracy, but it became a public event. The new public for the opera had its own preferences as to what it wanted to see and hear on stage. Audiences showed a wild enthusiasm particularly towards spectacle and incredible machines which made carriages fly and ships sail. Those public demands had a great impact on the nature of opera: at the expense of a logical and credible plot which took into account the Aristotelian unities, pomp and circumstance and spectacle determined the core of opera.

Opera's drifting away from Greek tragedy eventually lead to the first reform of the genre. This first reform of opera since the beginning of the genre is closely connected with the names of the librettists Zeno (1668-1750) and Metastasio (1698-1782). Their reform was a reaction to Venetian opera, which in their eyes had drifted away from the initial model of opera: Greek tragedy and its Aristotelian unities of time, place and action. Zeno and Metastasio wanted to bring opera back to its roots. Both had received a good education, and especially Metastasio was very well informed about the classical rules which were at the root of Greek tragedy. His efforts lead to a new type of opera: *opera seria*, the libretti of which were based on historical events, not on myth or fable. Although Metastasio could bring the exaggerated use of spectacle and machines to an end, he could not reduce the growing importance of the singers and the dominance of the music over the words. The vo-

cal techniques and acrobatics of the singers was an element the audience liked. Librettists and composers took advantage of this preference by concentrating on the arias, which reduced opera to a sequence of arias. Metastasio brought some order into chaos by standardizing the place of the aria at the end of a scene. Because those arias were almost always followed by the singer's exit, they were called exit arias[1].

Metastasio's reform did not last very long. About fifteen years later, history seemed to repeat itself: again, opera was drifting away from the ideas of the Camerata. This time the drift was caused by the singers. The importance which was attached to the arias lead to a neglect of the recitative. Singers were not interested in these recitatives at all; instead, they rattled them off so that they could display their vocal capacities in the next aria as soon as possible. Because this was what the audience wanted, the importance and the influence of the singers could grow larger and larger. Composers had to produce custom-made arias, and some singers even had a private composer at their disposal who could write custom-made spectacular embellishments into existing arias. The second reform in the history of opera tried to put these practices to an end. Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) and his librettist Rainieri Calzabigi (1714-1795) were the architects of this reform, the main result of which is their opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762). The libretto of this opera, of which it is noteworthy that it deals with the same subject as Rinuccini and Peri's *Euridice* with which the history of opera began, shows one characteristic which can be considered as a constant of the Italian libretto since this reform: shortness or *brevità* (Smith, 1970). Whereas in the case of opera seria music dominated the word, Gluck and Calzabigi favored the opposite, which meant a revival of the ideals of the Camerata:

> I sought to restrict music to its true function, namely to serve the poetry by means of the expression—and the situations which make up the plot—without interrupting the action or diminishing its interest by useless and superfluous ornament. (Gluck in: Weisstein, 1969:106)

Unfortunately for Gluck and Calzabigi, their reform opera was only successful in France, which is not surprising as in French opera from its beginnings with Jean-Baptiste Lully (1637-1682) and his librettist Philippe Quinault to the days of Gluck, poetry had always dominated music—a result of the French

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[1] Arias were carefully distributed among the different singers. The bulk of arias and the best of them were predestined for the *primo uomo* (usually a castrate), the *prima donna* and the tenor. The other members of the cast had far fewer arias to sing and they got paid far less as well.

fixation on spoken theater[2]. In Italy, opera seria still was very popular, as it was also in Germany and Austria. The popularity of Italian opera in the German speaking countries was to a certain extent at the expense of the *Singspiel*, an attempt to establish a German type of opera. German Singspiel was based on the English genre of ballad opera[3], in which spoken dialog was alternated with songs written in a popular style. In Germany, its subject and its simplicity made Singspiele very popular. Inspired by this success, the Austrian emperor Joseph II founded in 1778 the National-Singspiel, an institution which should encourage composers and poets to write operas in the vernacular. The emperor's project never really got off the ground: German translations of Italian and French operas were far more successful. Due to a lack of success, the project was canceled eight years later. However, it was not all trouble and affliction. Some Singspiele were very popular, and their popularity exceeded the popularity of the foreign productions which were performed in Vienna. One of those very successful Singspiele was *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, written in 1782 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) and Gottlieb Stephanie the younger.

Mozart had very clear ideas regarding the relation between text and music in opera. Whereas composers like Gluck, Monteverdi and Peri took the text as a starting point and never allowed the music to dominate the words, Mozart took a different position. In a letter to his father, dated October 13, 1781, he wrote:

> I should say that in an opera the poetry must be altogether the obedient daughter of the music. Why do Italian comic operas please everywhere—in spite of their miserable libretti—even in Paris, where I myself witnessed their success? Just because there the music reigns supreme and when one listens to it all else is forgotten. (Mozart in: Weisstein, 1969:131/132)

The state of the art of libretto writing to which Mozart refers here, was not new; in fact, from the beginning of the history of opera on, the quality of many libretti left much to be desired. For example, the typical libretto of

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[2] In France, each libretto had to be approved by the *Académie française* before it could be handed over to the composer. As Patrick Smith points out, the fact that he was using officially approved libretti did not prevent Lully from making alterations to the libretto during the process of composition (Smith, 1970:50).

[3] One of the most famous ballad operas was *The Beggar's Opera* (1728; libretto by John Gay, music by John Pepusch) which ridicules Italian opera. Bertolt Brecht based his *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1928, music by Kurt Weill) on *The Beggar's Opera*.

Venetian opera was a very complicated maze of plots and sub-plots which did not seem to make any sense and which did not seem to serve any other purpose than providing an excuse for extravagant pomp and circumstance. The libretti Mozart was referring to— the libretti of Lorenzo da Ponte with whom Mozart wrote *Le nozze di Figaro* (1786), *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Così fan tutte* (1789) certainly did not belong to this category— suffered from what Mozart called in the same letter the 'pedantic fashion' of 'rhymes— solely for the sake of rhyming', a practice which Mozart called 'the most detrimental'. He continues fulminating against the malpractice of bad libretto writing:

> Poets always remind me of trumpeters with their professional tricks. If we composers were always to stick so faithfully to our rules (which were very good at a time when no one knew better), we should be concocting music as unpalatable as their libretti. (ibidem)

The problem Mozart touches here, that is, the problem that poets stick to old conventions, was also very problematic for a composer like Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). Verdi too suffered from the mediocrity of most of his librettists. He loathed their sticking to old habits, which he considered to be incompatible with his idea of *opera a intenzione*, that is, opera which fully exploits the dramatic situation. Dramatic situation was the core of Verdi's poetics of opera. If necessary, both text and music had to break the old conventions to give full room to the dramatic impact of a situation. Even the aspect of credibility, which had been one of the main causes for reforms of the genre of opera, had to give way to Verdi's fixation on drama. Unfortunately for Verdi, he had to wait until Arrigo Boito (1842-1918) crossed his path, someone in whom Verdi finally found a poet who could write libretti the way he wanted them in order to realize his ideas. Together, Verdi and Boito collaborated on only two operas: *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff*, Verdi's last opera (1893).

Verdi always made sure that he was in control of the writing process of his libretti. He even provided his librettists with complete drafts in prose. By doing so, he was only one small step away from writing his own libretti. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was probably one of the first composer of operas ever who took this step and who wrote his own libretti. Wagner's operas changed the history of opera. With his tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen, ein Bühnenfestspiel in drei Tagen und einem Vorabend*, which was first performed as a cycle in 1876, Wagner abandoned all operatic conventions and created a new art form: the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Opera considered as a Gesamtkunstwerk means that all operatic devices (words, music and staging) are treated as equal counterparts, the combination of which creates an effect of synergy (see also Kaindl, 1995). By establishing equality between those aspects, the old question

which frequently caused turmoil in the history of opera up to Wagner, the question of whether the words should dominate the music or vice versa, was made dead wood. Wagner established equality between words and music by using *Leitmotive*[4], a central concept of the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk. Leitmotive are musical themes or motives which are linked to specific characters, objects or ideas as they occur in the dramatic text of the opera. The act of linking is established by presenting the Leitmotiv the first time that its corresponding character, object or idea appears. The substance of the Leitmotiv can be derived from the words which are sung to it the first time it is presented. Leitmotive can be considered as musical labels, but they are more than that: the Leitmotiv can add a new dimension to the dramatic situation by recalling a character, an object or an idea, by changing in accordance to the twists of the drama, or by establishing a formal relation with other Leitmotive, as a result of which a relation can be suggested between the concepts they refer to. Although Wagner's ideas regarding opera as a Gesamtkunstwerk in one way or another influenced the creative output of many composers and librettists after him, the Wagnerian concept of opera was by no means hailed by everyone; on the contrary, his ideas were subject to severe criticism. A composer like Igor Stravinsky rejected Wagner. Instead of aiming at a type of opera in which all of its constituant elements work closely together to attain an effect of synergy, Stravinsky and other anti-Wagnerian composers favored a more Mozartian concept of opera, a kind of opera in which the music dominates the words.

The history of opera is to a great extent the history of the relation between music and text. From this point of view, the history of opera can be described as a wave-like motion in which the main two opposite opinions (the opinion that music dominates the words on the one hand and the opinion that music is subordinate to the words on the other) alternate with each other. The relation words-music is a controversial subject in the history of opera, and we are dealing here with an impasse which recalls the impasse in musicology regarding the subject of music and meaning as dealt with in the previous section. In the text-music relation in opera, the one-sided orientation comes from the fact that it has always belonged to the realm of opera writing. Being a composer of operas or a librettist it is absolutely legitimate to be concerned

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[4] Wagner did not invent the concept of Leitmotive—premature aspects of it can be found for example in Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821, libretto: Kind), whereas a form of opera as Gesamtkunstwerk can be found, for example, in the grand opéras by Meyerbeer (1791-1864) and his librettist Scribe (1791-1861). However, Wagner was the first to elaborate those concepts in profound essays (the main of which is considered to be *Oper und Drama* from 1851) and to apply them on such a large scale as he did in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

with the traditional interpretation of the question about the relation between the different elements of opera; actually, it could be argued that you even are obliged to do so, for the final result depends on the position you take in this discussion. However, this traditional question is not the only possible approach to the text-music relation, and it is certainly not sacrosanct, especially not when the topic of signification is at issue. The relation text-music would be better served when looked upon from a different point of view, not from a compositional one, which deals with questions like 'Can the music have its own meter?' and 'Can the composer freely play with musical forms or does the music have to follow the text's prosody?', but from the point of view of signification ('How does the combination of words and music signify?'), a semiotic approach indeed. Following the semiotic approach, the question has to be answered how within the context of opera the co-presence of libretto and music contributes to the process of signification (see also Gorlée & Van Baest, 1997), which comes down to analyzing signification processes. But before we go further into opera as a semiotic phenomenon, we have to explore a second main issue that runs through the history of opera. Whereas the previous discussion of opera basically dealt with its formal fundamentals, in the next section our attention will be directed towards the subject matter of opera, which comes down to a discussion of the relation between opera and a different art form: literature.

Opera and literature

It was not by coincidence that Peri and Rinuccini derived the subject for their opera *Euridice* from Greek mythology. The Florentine Camerata, the group of humanists Peri and Rinuccini belonged to, considered the principles of Greek art to be the foundation of a new kind of music which had to meet humanist standards, a music which took individuality as a starting point. By using classical myth as a source of inspiration, the Florentines showed that they stood in the line of Renaissance humanists and their principle of *ad fontes*. A more pragmatic reason for deriving operas from mythological subject matter was that the new expressive music had to be justified and that by using mythological characters a powerful statement about the times of the Florentines as well as their princely patron could be made. This need for justification influenced early opera in the way it influenced Peri and Rinucci's *Euridice*. Their opera contains a prologue in which Tragedy addresses the audience with a rather extended justification of the new genre by repudiating the violent nature of traditional, that is, spoken tragedy and its appeal to basic emotions:

Non sangue sparso d'innocenti vene,
non ciglia spente di tiranno insano,
spettacolo infelice al guardo humano,
canto su meste e lacrimose scene.
Lungi via, lungi pur da'regij tetti,
simulacri funesti, ombre d'affanni:
ecco i mesti coturni e i foschi panni
cangio e desto ne i cor più dolci affetti.

No longer of blood shed by innocent veins, nor of eyes put out by the insane tyrant, unhappy spectacle to human sight, do I sing now on a gloomy and tear-filled stage. Away, away from this royal house, funereal images, shades of sorrow: behold, I change my gloomy buskins and dark robes to awaken in the heart sweeter emotions.

With respect to the justification of the new music and especially the new genre of the opera which emerged from it, the appearance of Apollo and Orpheus in the first operas made the fact that in opera characters sung in verse rather than speaking in prose less unbelievable, because Apollo and Orpheus were known for their musical qualities. These reasons, later combined with myth as a good excuse for all kinds of spectacle and incredible stage machinery, may account for the popularity of classical myth as a source for writing operas in the period of early opera in the first years of the eighteenth century. Once those reasons fell away, when opera had established itself as a mature musical genre, only one reason for using mythological or historical subjects survived: 'high characters' like gods and famous kings were ordinary people in respect of their humanlike problems. This made history and classical mythology perfect sources for serious opera. Within the realm of comic opera, however, subject matters were derived from sources the new opera audience, the bourgeois citizen, was familiar with: no more gods and great kings, but characters whom you could walk into just around the corner and which had to live through easily recognizable situations. Because librettists and composers of opera realized that using recognizable characters in recognizable situations was far more successful than the once much acclaimed mythological or historical approach, serious opera soon got influenced by the success of the comic approach of subject matter. Near the end of the eighteenth century, this intermingling of both main operatic genres lead to the creation of operas like *Così fan tutte*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*, all by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838).

Although in the history of opera the subject of its libretto shifted from mythology and history to more or less contemporary characters and situations, one constant remained: throughout the years a majority of the libretti have been based on literary works, either on literature from earlier periods or on contemporary literature. In the nineteenth century, this practice reaches a climax with operas like Verdi's Shakespeare-based operas *Macbeth* (1847), *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893), and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*

(1878) and *The Queen of Spades* (1890), both based on Pushkin, whereas in the twentieth century operas such as Richard Strauss' *Salome* (1905, based on Oscar Wilde's tragedy), Berg's *Wozzeck* (1925, based on a play by Georg Büchner), and Prokofiev's *War and Peace* (1943, based on Tolstoy) have been written. To this type of literary opera another dimension is added at the end of the nineteenth century, when the art of libretto writing is performed by distinguished literary authors such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874-1929), who wrote libretti for Richard Strauss, W.H. Auden (1907-1973), who wrote libretti for Benjamin Britten and Igor Stravinsky, and Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), who wrote libretti for Kurt Weill. Although some of their libretti are original works, a great part of the output of the 'literary librettists' consists of adaptations from existing literary works, either written by themselves— Von Hofmannsthal's libretto *Elektra*, set to music by Richard Strauss, for example is an adaptation of his own free adaptation of Sophocles— or by other literary authors.

The act of adapting literary works for the opera is as old as opera itself. Two main reasons can be found for using adaptations instead of the original works. When a librettist is looking for good material on the basis of which he can write his libretto, he can use the works of literature as a source. However, although it is not difficult to find suitable material, it is very likely that the way in which this raw material is worked out thematically in the literary source is not directly suitable for operatic purposes. It may be that the occasion on behalf of which the opera is written demands a specific treatment of the basic material. Rinuccini and Peri's *Euridice*, for example, was first performed on the occasion of the wedding of Henry IV of France and Maria de'Medici. Now, in the myth as written down by Ovid, Euridice is lost when Orpheus looks back at her while ascending from Hades. However, in Rinuccini's libretto, Pluto, the king of the underworld, is so charmed by Orpheus' singing, that he decides to release Euridice unconditionally. Within the context of a wedding, the original ending certainly would have been impropriate; therefore, Rinuccini introduced Pluto as a *deus ex machina* which turns things for the better.

Although a literary work can prove to be a good source for a libretto, it could contain elements which might be too controversial for a particular audience. In this case, the librettist is likely to adapt his source in order not to offend his (potential) audience. Badoaro's libretto for *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1640; music by Monteverdi) is a good example of such commercial opera writing. In this libretto Badoaro exploited all stock devices which characterized Venetian opera, among others the use of spectacular effects and comic characters. Badoaro apologized for not taking into account the principles of Greek tragedy. He defended himself by stating that he joined the contempo-

rary habit of introducing implausible actions only to amuse and to please the audience. Another example of transforming a literary work into a libretto with the aim not to offend the audience is Donizetti's *Linda di Chamounix* (1842, libretto by Rossi). The libretto of *Linda* was based on a play Donizetti (1797-1848) had seen in Paris. Donizetti believed that the subject would be acceptable to the aristocratic and conservative audience he had to satisfy, but not the way in which this subject was thematized in the play. Together with Rossi, Donizetti had had to make many changes to the play. The Marquis for example became a *buffo* or comical role, which enabled Donizetti and Rossi to soften the worst sides of his character: in Vienna it was impossible to represent an aristocrat as a degenerate. Despite all modifications, Donizetti had troubles with censorship at Naples a year later, as a result of which he added a scene in which the Marquis mends his ways and promises to marry Linda (OperaGlass, 1996).

Not only the thematical treatment of the material as found in a particular literary source can be a reason for the librettist to rearrange this material as an instance of conformism, its formal aspect is an even more important reason. Opera imposes specific requirements on the libretto. These requirements can be summarized under the heading *brevità*: shortness. This shortness is not so much a shortness in terms of length as in terms of the language of the libretto. Karen Achberger (Achberger, 1980) describes what the language of the libretto should not be: descriptive, rhetorically complicated, discursive, metaphorical, abstract and abundant in its use of words. Those characteristics, according to Achberger, do not leave room for musical expression; instead, 'Ironie etwa und Metapher, Bilderreichtum und dergleichen werden am besten der musikalischen Sprache überlassen' (ibidem:13). This implies that the libretto is an unfinished art form, which music and staging should complete. What a libretto focusses on are character and plot (ibidem), or, as Gary Schmidgall puts it, 'A librettist, then, fashioning his text from a literary source, will naturally gravitate away from passages of discursive complexity and toward those that issue in psychological or physical action' (Schmidgall, 1977:15).

By stressing the aspects of psychological action and physical action, the concepts 'character' and 'plot' from Aristotle's *Poetics* are recalled. He defines tragedy as 'the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character— are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends' (Aristotle, 1996). According to Aristotle, tragedy has to contain six elements: Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle and Song. He considers Plot to be the most important, for

'Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality' (ibidem). Because action has to be performed by human beings, Character is the element of Tragedy which holds the second place. It is only important because it is a necessity for the unfolding of the action, in this sense, that it puts the action into perspective. However, Aristotle considers Character to be inferior to Plot. He stresses the importance of Plot and the secondary role of Character as follows: 'if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents' (ibidem).

The Florentine Camerata aimed at reconstructing the authentic performance pratice of ancient Greek Tragedy; it should be noted, however, that opera in general belongs to the genre of non-Aristotelian drama (see chapter 3). Tragedy is about action and character; focussing on these elements is exactly what librettists do when transforming a literary work into a libretto suitable for the operatic stage. Harald Fricke (Fricke, 1985) recognizes six different types of transformation which are used to reduce the literary work to the 'Textminimum' (Achberger, 1980:12) the libretto has to be in order to enable the composer to write effective music to the words. Three of Fricke's transformational devices have to be mentioned here, for they are not limited to the adaptation of plays, but they apply to any literary work which is to be adapted for operatic purposes:

1. reduction ('Verknappung'): reducing the length of the literary work as well as the number of characters, scenes and the like;
2. simultaneity ('Gleichzeitigkeit'): in opera, characters can simultaneously appear on the stage in the form of ensembles or as a choir, which enables them to express their emotions or whatsoever simultaneously;
3. implicitness ('Implizitheit'): it is not necessary to explain everything in the text. What is suppressed in the libretto can be made explicit by the music.

Examples of these devices can be found in any opera based on a literary work. Reduction, for example, occurs in Verdi's *Otello* (1887), based on Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello*. Boito, who wrote the libretto, reduced the number of main characters from thirteen to eight, and his libretto consists of four acts instead of five. Boito also reduced Shakespeare's tragedy at the level of language. Instead of using rich language and typical Shakespearean techniques like the soliloquy, Boito's libretto is an example of Italian *brevità*:

Otello:
E tu ... come sei pallida!
E stanca, e muta, e bella,
Pia creatura nata sotto maligna stella.
Fredda come la casta tua vita ...
E in cielo assorta.
Desdemona! Desdemona! ...
Ah ... morta! morta! morta! ...

Otello:
And you ... how pale you are,
And wan and mute and beautiful,
Good creature born under an evil star.
Cold as the chastity of your life ...
Now gathered to the skies.
Desdemona! Desdemona! ...
Ah ... dead! Dead! Dead! ....

Compare this to the parallel in Shakespeare's tragedy, Act V Scene 2:

Othello:
Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!
Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Simultaneity occurs whenever an ensemble appears on stage. A good example of this device can be found in Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel* (1923, libretto by the composer). The final scene of this opera, based on the novel by Valery Bryusov, is an extensive ensemble which exploits the exorcism performed by the Inquisitor upon Renata and the mass hysteria that results from it (the three parts are sung simultaneously):

Monachini
Poklonjajtes' Bel'zevulu,
Poklonjajtes' Belu,
Slav'te, sestry, cestvujte Pajmona,
Ctite Beliala, ich sukkubov i ich inkubov
Šest' sester
Ach, sestra Renata!...
Renata
Smilujasja!

Nuns
Worship Beelzebub,
Worship Baal,
Praise, sisters, honour Daimon,
Revere Belial, their succubi and incubi.
Six sisters
Ah, Sister Renata!
Renata
Have mercy!

Implicitness occurs whenever the music stresses that which is not said in the text. An example of this can be found in Gluck's opera *Iphigénie en Tauride* (libretto: Guillard), when Orestes sings 'Le calme rentre dans mon coeur' ('calm returns to my heart'), whereas the orchestra plays agitated music. Gluck was once asked the reason for this peculiar effect. The story goes that Gluck's response was that Orestes was lying, whereas violins can only speak the truth: he was not calm at all.

Adapting literary works for the operatic stage is an act which belongs to the domain of intertextuality. Intertextual relations between a libretto and its literary predecessors have consequences for signification processes regarding the libretto; therefore, it would be fruitful to take a closer look at the intertextual dimension of opera. However, focussing on this aspect is not the same as dealing with signification in opera; to the extent that intertextuality is involved in signification it is one of the many interpretative moves that are made. This would not justify an exclusive treatment of intertextual processes. What we need is a method for describing signification processes that acknowledges the multimedial aspect of opera: opera is a multimedial art form in which the textual, the musical and the theatrical aspect influence both each other and, by their simultaneous appearance as one integrated event, the subject as well. This method should be able to cope with signification in opera at a neutral level, that is, the method should not be derived from the exclusive domain of either literary studies, musicology or theatrical studies. With regard to the theatrical aspect of opera, it should be mentioned here that this aspect of opera will be ignored (see also chapter 3). Instead we will concentrate on opera as the copresence of libretto and music. This is the first premise of this book. The second premise of this book is inspired by the two impasses that were discussed in this chapter. As was argued, both the impasse regarding musical meaning and the impasse about the relation between words and music in opera originate from a modernist approach which considers music and meaning, and words and music as independent autonomous concepts. The present study considers these concepts as mental, that is, human, constructs which, from the viewpoint of signification, are interdependent. This interdependent relation as it is embodied in a process of signification will be approached in this book from a Peircean semiotic point of view, the core activity of which is to describe such signification processes. Taking these two premises in mind, we now can formulate the central question to which this book tries to find an answer:

On the basis of Peircean semiotics, what can be learned about signification regarding opera as the copresence of libretto and music?

Chapter 2 deals with the fundamentals of Peircean semiotics, and the outlines for a semiotic theory of signification in opera are presented in chapter 3. On the basis of the theory as outlined in these two chapters, chapters 4-6 present a semiotic analysis of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, an opera written by Gluck and Calzabigi in 1762. In the last chapter, chapter 7, a semiotic theory of opera will be suggested as an answer to the central question of this study.

CHAPTER 2

THE SEMIOTICS OF C.S. PEIRCE

Semiotics

The word 'semiotics' is derived from the Greek word for 'sign', 'semeion': semiotics is the science which studies signs. The fundamental presupposition of semiotics is that knowledge can only be gained through the mediation of signs. All knowledge we have is mediated by signs. How does this work? The procedures a semiotician uses can best be compared with a detective's activities to find out who committed the crime and the motive for committing the crime. This is what the detective wants to gain knowledge about, but unfortunately, detectives usually do not know anything about the reality of the past they have to reconstruct. To find answers to his questions, the detective has to search for small clues like fingerprints and blood samples. Those clues are signs, and by collecting and linking them, hypotheses regarding what has happened can be formulated, and he who offended the law can be punished.

Detectives, archeologists, doctors and all other people who use signs to gain knowledge about something are actually semioticians. The difference with what we perhaps might call a 'real' semiotician lies in the fact that the latter is not so much interested in the result of a process of signification, as doctors and detectives are, but it is this process itself which is the object of semiotic research. How do people deal with signs, and how do they attribute meaning to them? These are some of the questions a semiotician tries to answer, thereby taking as a starting point either the principles of the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) or from the works of the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). In this dissertation, the latter will be used as theoretical framework[1].

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[1] I will not further deal with structuralistic semiotics. Those interested are referred to Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale*. Structuralistic semiotics is further developed by Louis Hjelmslev (*Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*) and Algirdas Julien Greimas (*Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la theorie du language*). A fine introduction is offered by Gerard Lukken et al. (*Semiotiek en christelijke uitingsvormen*; in Dutch), and Willem Marie Speelman (Speelman, 1995) developed a semiotics of music on the basis of Greimas and his predecessors (*The Generation of Meaning in Liturgical Songs*). Comparisons of structuralistic semiotics and Peircean semiotics can be found in for example Dinda Gorlée's article *Symbolic argument*

Charles Sanders Peirce

Charles Sanders Peirce was born in 1839 in Cambridge Massachusetts. He was the son of Benjamin and Sarah Hunt Mills Peirce. In 1855, Peirce entered Harvard, where he studied mathematics under his father, then considered as the leading mathematician of America, and his brother James. Four years later, in 1859, Charles Sanders Peirce graduated from Harvard. In 1862 he took an M.A. degree at Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. One year later (1863) Peirce took a B.Sc. degree in chemistry *summa cum laude*.

Although Peirce started to lecture philosophy at Harvard in 1869 and he was made assistant at the Harvard Observatory in the same year, he only succeeded in obtaining temporary positions at universities. During the 1870's, he tried to obtain teaching positions, however, without success. As a result of the mediation of William James, Peirce was made Lecturer on Logic at Johns Hopkins University in 1879. Five years later, however, Peirce was fired. Never again was he to hold an academic position. From 1887, he lived in total isolation. Although William James arranged occasional lectures for him, Peirce's only income was from his writings and from his reviews for several periodicals. He died in 1914[2].

When he died, Peirce left a huge pile of manuscripts— to date, more than 90,000 pages have been tracked down. However, only a small part (about 10,000 pages) of this has been published, which means that the bulk of Peirce's work is not available yet for scientific purposes. A major part of Peirce's published manuscripts can be found in the eight volumes of the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, issued from the 1930's onward. Although its title suggests otherwise, the Collected Papers is only a small selection of his until then unpublished material. Because of the rather thematical arrangement of the Collected Papers, which obstructs any clear view of the development of Peirce's thought, Peirce has been accused of inconsistency, contradiction and confusion of ideas. As Dinda Gorlée points out, the *Collected Papers* can be characterized as 'a collage of widely heterogeneous texts from widely different moments and periods, put together by the editors with scissors and gluepot, as it were. A bricolage, in Lévi-Strauss' terminology, but a very useful one, also for the serious student of Peirce's thought, semiotic and otherwise' (Gorlée, 1993:34). In 1982 a project was started with the title *The Writings of Charles S. Peirce: A Chronological Edition*. This project aims at, as the title already suggests, a chronological publication of Peirce's manuscripts.

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and beyond: A Peircean view on structuralist reasoning (in: Poetics Today 13-3:407-423, 1992) and in (Van Driel, 1993).

[2] Biographical notes on Charles Sanders Peirce are derived from (Murphey, 1993). See also (Brent, 1993).

Even with Peirce's manuscripts being adequately unlocked, two other problems remain. Peirce refused to concede to the reader as far as his own philosophical and logical integrity is concerned. As a result, Peirce's language is very dense with now and then hermetical aspects. Secondly, although an architectonic coherence can be found in Peirce's thought, a complete and systematic semiotic theory does not emerge from it. Here we have two more reasons which might account for the relatively late attention for Peirce's semiotics as a suitable framework for studying signification. Whereas the number of theoretical accounts of Peirce's thought is relatively large and old, applying Peirce's semiotics has only begun to flourish in the late seventies and early eighties. Since then Peirce has been applied to a wide range of fields, for example literature, painting, film and translation theory.

And how about music? Although references to Peirce are made by musicologists like Wilson Coker, Vladimir Karbusicky and Eero Tarasti, those approaches cannot be called 'Peircean', for they use some parts of Peirce's semiotic theory within their own theoretical framework instead of starting from an integrated Peircean framework. Lucia Santaella Braga (Santaella Braga, 1993) divides this framework into three branches:

> (1)First is the *general theory of signs* [...];
> (2)A second branch, *critical logic*, studies the types of argument or reasoning, determining their force and validity, or the conditions for their truth [...];
> (3)The third branch, *speculative rhetoric* [...], [...] is a theory of methods of research, the theory of how investigations should be conducted. (Santaella Braga, 1993:402/403)

As Santaella Braga notices, of these branches only the theory of signs is well-known and widely used. Most musical applications of Peirce (and this is also true for applications of Peirce in other fields) confine themselves to this particular element of his semiotics, of which the relation between a sign and its object seems to appeal rather strongly to the scholar's imagination, judging from the fact that of all of Peirce's concepts the trichotomy icon-index-symbol is the one most frequently used[3]. Santaella Braga warns against degrading Peirce's philosophy to 'a mere sum of odd terminologies ready to be put in the service of immediate utilitarian needs' (Santaella Braga, 1993:404),

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[3] In *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* (Monelle, 1992), Raymond Monelle gives both an overview of the major trends in musical semiotics and an introduction to a large range of approaches, including Peirce-based forms of musical semiotics. Although Monelle presents several elements of Peirce's semiotics, he mainly deals with icon, index and symbol.

whereas Herman Parret concludes his introduction to *Peirce and Value Theory* (Parret, 1994:xii) with the observation of the existence of 'a tendency to fragment Peircean thought [...]. Nothing can be more dangerous and reductive. Peirce offers us a cathedral the architecture of which is neither proportional nor harmonious but solidly based on a vision of the world and of man that is perfectly homogenous and non-contradictory' (Parret, 1994:xii/xiii). With this in mind, the number of Peircean approaches to musical signification in the most strict sense of the word becomes even less than it already was. However, the contributions of William Dougherty (see for example Dougherty, 1992 and Dougherty 1994) to the theory of musical signification are fruitful and interesting attempts to come to a Peircean semiotics of music. His approach implicitly provides an answer to the question as posed by the title of an article by Eero Tarasti in *Peirce and Value Theory* (Tarasti, 1994): *Can Peirce be applied to music?* [4]. The answer is clear: yes, it is possible to develop a semiotics of music which takes into account Peirce's theoretical framework (see for example Van Baest and Van Driel, 1995). In this dissertation it will be shown how signification in text-music relations can be dealt with from a Peircean point of view. In order to do so, we will first deal with some important features of Peirce's semiotics.

Categories, Pragmatism and Semiosis

Herman Parret described Peirce's thought as a 'cathedral'. Now a cathedral, just like any other building, needs a fundament. Peirce's fundament is formed by what he calls 'the categories', three concepts which he holds to be imma-

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[4] Tarasti answers this question positively by elaborating on the musical application of firstness, secondness and thirdness in an analysis of the music of Martinu and Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an exhibition*. Tarasti concentrates on the cognitive activities of the musicologist. From this viewpoint, he defines the Peircean categories as follows: '[...] if Firstness means our emotional, instinctive and intuitive reaction and its verbalisation [...], then Secondness would consist in the "normal" musicological analysis [...] and the Thirdness the semiotic meta-analysis of both of them [...]' (Tarasti, 1994:340). This is a somehow peculiar conception of Peirce's categories. Firstness is an unembodied quality, a virtual reality. As soon as it is embodied, it belongs to the realms of secondness. Consequently, verbalizing or otherwise consciously realizing first contact with a particular composition, or whatever sign, can never be an instance of firstness, for it is not virtual but actual. As such, it has to be a form of secondness.

nent in all aspects of reality, and which are therefore phenomenological categories, or 'modes of being':

> My view is that there are three modes of being. I hold that we can observe them in elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way. (CP 1.23, 1903)

Peirce calls his three categories 'Firstness', 'Secondness', and 'Thirdness'. Firstness is immediate feeling, unanalyzed; it is 'the being of positive qualitative possibility' (CP 1.23, 1903), and as such 'distinct from objective perception, will, and thought' (CP 1.303, c. 1894). As examples of Firstness Peirce mentions qualities like the color of magenta, the odor of attar, the sound of a railway whistle, the taste of quinine and the quality of falling in love. It is important to realise that Firstness is about those qualities themselves, and not about experiencing them: 'When I say it is a quality, I do not mean that it "inheres" in [a] subject' (CP 1.304, c. 1904). It is exactly this characteristic of the First which makes it hard for us to understand, for we are not used to dealing with unembodied feelings. Dealing with Firsts therefore requires imagination. According to Peirce,

> A quality of feeling can be imagined to be without any occurrence [...]. Its mere may-being gets along without any realization at all. (CP 1.304, c. 1904)

As soon as a First, 'merely something that *might* be realized' (CP 7.538, undated), is realized— is embodied in a subject— the category of Secondness is involved. A Second is 'an occurrence [...] something that *actually* takes place' (ibidem). Secondness is the category which makes us experience existence or what actually is. It necessarily involves Firstness, which has to do with reality: Firsts are real, but they do not exist in the sense that we can experience them. Only through their realization, when the real becomes existent, they can be experienced. 'The bulk of what is actually done consists of Secondness— or better, Secondness is the predominant character of what *has been* done' (CP 1.343, 1903): not only does Secondness occur *hic et nunc*, it is also closely connected with what has happened in our past (cf. Gorlée, 1987:46), which is not so strange, because almost our entire existence consists of, and is based on, what our ancestors left us.

Whereas the First is 'a mere idea unrealized' (CP 1.342, c. 1895) and 'the cases to which it applies' (ibidem) are Seconds, the category of Thirdness, which necessarily involves those of Secondness and Firstness, is 'the being of law that will govern facts in the future' (CP 1.23, 1903). It is the effectuation of something which connects two terms with each other; we call such effec-

tuation a mental activity. Thirdness is a matter of law. It embodies the general principles which provide logical explanations by connecting 'the absolute first and last' (CP 1.337, c. 1875). The Third is the medium between them. As a consequence, signification, which is nothing more than the intellectual process in which one thing is being related to another, involves Thirdness: 'meaning is obviously a triadic relation' (CP. 1.344, 1903). The same is also true for emotions 'which are popularly considered to be peculiar of the human species' (Gorlée, 1987:47). Thirds guide our actions, in the sense that they permit us 'to predict what is to be, and to adapt our attitude accordingly' (ibidem:37). Firsts 'may be', Seconds 'actually are' and Thirds 'must be' (Gorlée, 1993:57).

With the remark that Thirds guide our actions, we arrive at the nucleus of Peircean thought. According to Peirce, the aim of thinking is to establish meaning, to strive for the truth regarding a phenomenon. This truth, this meaning is the sum of all imaginable possible consequences of this object's acting. Peirce described this as follows:

> Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object. (CP 5.402, 1878)

This 'rule for attaining the third grade of clearness of apprehension' (CP 5.403, 1878) is Peirce's maxim of pragmatism. What he exactly means with this maxim becomes clear in his famous description of the meaning of 'lithium'. This meaning is a series of instructions which have to be followed to gain knowledge of lithium as an 'object of the world':

> If you look into a textbook of chemistry for a definition of *lithium* you may be told that it is that element whose atomic weight is 7 very nearly. But if the author has a more logical mind he will tell you that if you search among minerals that are vitreous, translucent, gray or white, very hard, brittle, and insoluble for one which imparts a crimson tinge to an unluminous flame, this mineral being triturated with lime of whiterite rats-bane, and then fused, can be partly dissolved in muriatic acid, and duly purified, it can be converted by ordinary methods into a chloride, which being obtained in the solid state, fused and electrolyzed with half a dozen powerfull cells, will yield a globule of a pinkish silvery metal that will float on gasolene; and the material of *that* is a specimen of lithium. The peculiarity of this definition—or rather this precept that is more serviceable than a definition—is that it tells you what the word *lithium* denotes by prescribing what you are to *do* in order to gain a perceptual acquaintance with the object of the world. (CP 2.330, 1902)

Meaning in its Peircean sense can be described as the process along which human beings furnish their world as a sensible world, or— in other words— the process along which we make ourselves at home in a strange world. In *How to make our ideas clear*, Peirce describes more precisely what he considers as the meaning of an object: 'what a thing means is simply what habit it involves' (CP 5.400, 1878). A habit is a rule of action, which is established by belief, 'something that we aware of' (CP 5.397, 1878) and 'which appeases the irritation of doubt' (ibidem). The concepts doubt, belief and habit play a major role in Peirce's method of science. We will deal with this later. For now, it suffices to know that surprising situations cause doubt, which we try to overcome by creating belief. Eventually, this belief is changed into a habit which guides our behaviour in similar situations. The process along which this takes place is commonly known as signification, in Peircean terminology *semiosis*. Semiosis involves three elements: a sign, an object and an interpretant. In his conception of semiosis, Peirce includes the notion that these elements are always active at the same time:

> [...] by "semiosis" I mean [...] an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs. (CP 5.484, c.1907)

Now let us take a closer look at the three elements which constitute semiosis: sign, object and interpretant.

Sign

The sign is the first element which together with the object and the interpretant constitutes semiosis. It is defined by Peirce as:

> anything which on the one hand is so determined by an Object and on the other so determines an idea in a person's mind, that this latter determination, which I term the interpretant of the sign, is thereby determined by that Object. (CP 8.343, 1908)

So, a sign refers to an object, and the interpretant, a formulation of one's assumptions about the object to which the sign might refer, represents this object. A direct relation between the object and the interpretant is impossible, for all knowledge is mediated by signs (Figure 2.1).

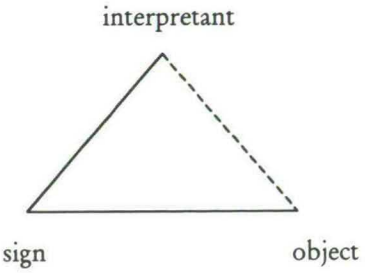

Figure 2.1

From another definition of the sign the categorial status of the three elements of semiosis becomes clear:

> A *sign* [...] is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its *Object*, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its *Interpretant*, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. (CP 2.274, 1902)

The Third, the interpretant, mediates between the First (the sign) and the Second (its object).

The First 'may be', that is, it is a matter of possibility, of virtuality. By determining the sign as a First, the question arises what kinds of thing can be signs and how can signs be distinguished from possible signs. With regard to the first question, Peirce made clear that anything can be a sign, that is, anything 'Cognizable' (CP 8.177, undated): 'all this Universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs' (CP 5.448, 1905). However, only in semiosis can signs act as signs, that is, by entering into a relation with an object and producing a new sign, the interpretant, this depending on the beliefs and habits of the sign-user.

A sign can appear in three different modalities, which Peirce called respectively qualisign, sinsign, and legisign. A qualisign, which is a form of Firstness, is:

> a quality which is a Sign. It cannot actually act as a sign until it is embodied; but the embodiment has nothing to do with its character as a sign. (CP 2.244, 1903)

The qualisign aspect of a phenomenon can only be assumed. It is related to the Peircean notion of reality: the set of phenomena we have knowledge of (also known as 'existence') and phenomena we could gain knowledge of, can

be looked upon as a set of possible signs (qualisigns). Each phenomenon contains a vast number of qualisign aspects, the actualization of which is subject to fixed habits and beliefs. As a result, the knowledge we could gain of a particular phenomenon is indeterminable (Van Driel, 1993).

When a certain qualisign aspect of a phenomenon is embodied (and if so, it is embodied because it is intriguing), we are dealing with a sinsign, 'an actual existent thing or event which is a sign. It can only be so through its qualities' (CP 2.245, 1903). A sinsign, a form of secondness, always involves a qualisign. It is an intriguing quality of a phenomenon, the qualisign aspect, which is transferred from reality to existence in order to try to place it in a certain network of habits and beliefs. Looked upon in this way, a sinsign is related to the Peircean notion of existence, the domain of our knowledge.

In many cases, it is obvious that (aspects of) phenomena are considered to be signs. In those cases, we are dealing with legisigns, a legisign being 'a law that is a Sign. This law is usually established by men' (CP 2.246, 1903). Every conventional sign, for example a traffic sign, is a legisign, a concept which is also related to existence. A legisign, a form of thirdness, necessarily involves a sinsign and a qualisign.

Object

The second element of semiosis is the object, the correlate or referent of the sign. Peirce distinguishes two kinds of object, the immediate object and the dynamical object:

> Namely, we have to distinguish the Immediate Object, which is the Object as the Sign itself represents it, and whose Being is thus dependent upon the Representation of it in the Sign, from the Dynamical Object, which is the Reality which by some means contrives to determine the Sign to its Representation. (CP 4.536, 1905)

With regard to the term object, differences occur between its everyday use and its use in a Peircean context. In everyday language, the range of the object is usually restricted to the Peircean notion of existence, which is everything we have knowledge of. In its Peircean sense, the term object has a much wider scope: it is related to the Peircean notion of reality, which is the sum of everything we have knowledge of (a form of secondness) and everything we could gain knowledge of in semiosis (a form of firstness). Because in semiosis a link is made between a known element (the sign, belonging to existence) and an unknown element (the dynamical object, belonging to reality), which as a result of this linking loses its obscure status, we can say that the purpose of

semiosis is to develop existence[5]. The nature of the dynamical object is indicated by the immediate object, a quality of the sign. A sign contains several immediate objects which refer to several dynamical objects. Which immediate object is actualized, depends on one's habits and beliefs regarding a certain phenomenon. Because the immediate object hints toward the dynamical object, an idea of what the latter is about results from 'careful examination of the sign in its surrounding context, together with what may be called "experience" and, in Peirce's words, 'collateral observation', aided by imagination and thought [...]' (Gorlée, 1993:50/51).

The dynamical object can be related to the sign on three different levels, which are based on the categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. This relation can be based on a quality which sign and object have incommon (Firstness) which can be embodied in the case of an actualized relation (Secondness). Lastly, the sign-object relation can be a conventional relation (Thirdness). In the first case, we are dealing with an iconical relation between the sign and its dynamical object. Peirce describes an icon as

> a sign which refers to the Object it denotes merely by virtue of characters of its own, and which it possesses, just the same, whether any such Object actually exists or not. (CP 2.247, 1903)

The possibility of the existence of a qualitative similarity between a sign and its object suggests that the sign can adopt some quality of the object involved (cf. portraits and maps). In an iconic relation, this object is an element of reality, so the object can be a familiar one as well as something which is entirely new. This notion is rather important, for it accounts for the fact that iconic relations can produce new knowledge (Van Driel, 1993).

The second, actualized relation between sign and object is indexical. It involves indices, which 'furnish positive assurance of the reality[6] and the nearness of their objects' (CP 4.531, 1905). Smoke indicates that there is a fire, and therefore it serves as an index; film is an indexical medium, for it assumes the presence of real actors[7]. Because of it being 'physically connected with its

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[5] Although it seems to be otherwise, the aspect of obscurity does not primarily bear on the dynamical object, but on the actualized sign-object relation. When I say that a sign is connected with a hitherto unknown object, I mean to say that to me this particular sign-object connection has been obscure until known, and *departing from the sign*, this object indeed was formerly unknown.

[6] Here, Peirce refers to the everyday use of the word reality, which is equal to the Peircean notion of existence.

[7] In our digitalized era, however, this is not necessarily so: films are being produced which do not involve the presence of real actors, stage settings and the like,

object' (CP 2.299, c. 1895), its relation of causality, the index, 'a sign which refers to the Object it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object' (CP 2.248, 1903), cannot produce new knowledge in the way icons can.

Often, the relation between a sign and its object is a matter of convention. In such cases, we are deling with a symbolical relation. A symbol is

> a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object. (CP 2.249, 1903)

Symbolical relations are based on fixed habits and beliefs; they enable us to think and to abstract. Because in symbolical relations the object is of very little influence on the nature of the sign, symbols 'do not enable us to add to our knowledge even so much as a necessary consequent' (CP 4.531, 1905). This does not mean that symbols have a static nature which is never to change; on the contrary. Consider what Peirce writes about the symbol:

> A symbol, once in being, spreads among the peoples. In use and experience, its meaning grows. Such words as *force, law, wealth, marriage*, bear for us very different meanings from those they bore to our barbarous ancestors. The symbol may, with Emerson's sphynx, say to man,
>
> Of thine eye I am eyebeam. (CP 2.302, 1895)

Here, Peirce very clearly emphasizes the dynamical nature of the symbol. Its meaning is a matter of consensus, but even when consensus is reached, this is not a guarantee for having defined the definitive meaning of the symbol: 'Since the association between the Symbol and its object is arbitrary, the interpretation may be changed at will and overruled by a new agreement' (Gorlée, 1987:48).

Although Peirce distinguishes between icons, indices and symbols, this by no means implies that these signs can exist in their purest forms: when we say that this sign is an icon, we mean to say that of this particular sign in this context the iconic aspect dominates. The same is true for indexical signs and symbols. Take for example the phrase 'A dark cloud' in the sentence 'A dark cloud appears in the sky'. When appearing in a poetical context, this phrase's symbolical aspect might dominate, the dark cloud symbolizing a

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but which are completely designed by computers. See Hans van Driel, Woord en beeld in beweging. Een eerste oriëntatie op hyperfiction en consequenties voor literatuur- en filmwetenschap, in: *Tijdschrift voor Literatuurwetenschap*, May 1997.

sense of doom and foreboding. It also possible that we perceive this sentence in the context of a weather forecast. In this case, the indexical aspect dominates: there really is a dark cloud which really appears in the sky and it is likely to produce real rain. In yet another case, we might refer to a certain characteristic of someone which happens to equal something we know from the real world. This is the iconic aspect of our phrase: 'Watch out, John is coming. He has been under a lot of stress lately. He is now like a dark cloud that appears in the sky on a beautiful summer day'. Because of their being context-sensitive, it is not very useful to draw up inventories of icons, indices and symbols. However, it is exactly in this way that this trichotomy is dealt with in many so-called Peircean approaches to for example literature, film and music. A point in favor of these approaches might be that such contexts can be analyzed, were it not that Peirce stresses the crucial role of the individual mind regarding the icon-index-symbol trichotomy:

> The Icon has no dynamical connection with the object it represents; it simply happens that its qualities resemble those of that object, and excite analogous sensations *in the mind for which it is a likeness*. [...] The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair, but the interpreting mind has nothing to do with this connection, *except remarking it*, after it is established. The symbol is connected with its object by virtue of the symbol-using mind, *without which no such connection would exist*. (CP 2.299, c. 1895 - italics mine)

To summarize: it is the sign-user who assigns a particular value to a sign-object relation, be it an iconic, an indexical or a symbolic value[8]. He does so on the basis of his point of view, his habits and beliefs, and his analysis of the qualities of the sign and the context in which the sign functions. Such assignment therefore is the result of thought, of semiosis; and semiosis, as we have seen, involves not only a sign and an object, but also an interpretant. Peirce considers the presence of an interpretant to be a *conditio sine qua non* for a sign to be able to exist: 'nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign' (CP 2.308, 1902). As a consequence, one cannot talk about icons, indices and symbols as they could appear in different types of discourse unless a particular semiosis is under discussion. No longer are we interested in the question

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[8] Vladimir Karbusicky is aware of this. He writes: 'Es ist die Rezipient, der die 'Inhalte' und eventuell die für ihn momentan wichtige Zeichenqualität der erklingenden Musikstruktur [...] bestimmt' (Karbusicky, 1986:5). He continues: 'Es wäre [...] verfehlt, alle Peirceschen Kategorien unbedingt mit Beispielen [...] aus allen Realitätsbereichen und allen Künsten belegen zu wollen' (ibidem:60).

'How can icons, indices and symbols appear in this type of discourse?', but what the semiotician wants to find out is an answer to the question 'At which moments during semiosis did this sign-user determine this particular sign-object relation as being iconic, indexical or symbolic?'. In other words: the trichotomy icon-index-symbol is not a goal in itself, but a means for analyzing semiosis. It cannot be dealt with properly without an interpretant being involved.

Interpretant

The third element which constitutes semiosis, together with the sign and the object, is the interpretant. In Peirce's work, two classifications of the interpretant can be found. In the first classification, Peirce distinguishes an immediate interpretant, a dynamical interpretant and a final interpretant:

> In regard to the Interpretant we have equally to distinguish, in the first place, the Immediate Interpretant, which is the Interpretant as it is revealed in the right understanding of the Sign itself, and is ordinarily called the *meaning* of the sign; while in the second place, we have to take note of the Dynamical Interpretant which is the actual effect which the Sign, as a Sign, really determines. Finally there is what I provisionally term the Final Interpretant, which refers to the manner in which the Sign tends to represent itself to be related to its Object. (CP 4.536, 1905)

In the second classification, Peirce distinguishes an emotional interpretant, an energetic interpretant and a logical interpretant:

> The first proper significate effect of a sign is a feeling produced by it [...]. This "emotional interpretant," as I call it, may amount to much more than that feeling of recognition; and in some cases, it is the only proper significate effect that the sign produces. [...] If a sign produces any further proper significate effect, it will do so through the mediation of the emotional interpretant, and such further effect will always involve an effort. I call it the energetic interpretant. [...] It never can be the meaning of an intellectual concept, since it is a single act, [while] such a concept is of a general nature. But what further kind of effect can there be? [...] I will call it the *logical interpretant*. (CP 5.475/476, c. 1907)

Now the question arises how these two classifications are related to each other. In secondary literature on Peirce's thought, two options can be found.

According to the first option, the two subdivisions are equal (Greenlee, 1973); in the second option, the emotional, the energetic and the logical interpretant are considered to be a subdivision of the dynamical interpretant (Fitzgerald, 1966; Almeder, 1980). In (Van Baest & Van Driel, 1995), Hans van Driel and I presented another option. We consider the second classification to be the main subdivision: semiosis can result in a feeling, an action and/or a proposition, following Peirce's suggestion that:

> a Sign has an Object and an Interpretant, the latter being that which the Sign produces in the Quasi-mind that is the Interpreter by determining the latter to a feeling, to an exertion, or to a Sign, which determination is the Interpretant. (CP 4.356, 1905)

In other words: semiosis can lead to an emotional interpretant ('a feeling'), an energetic interpretant ('an exertion') or a logical interpretant ('a Sign'). We consider Peirce's other classification of the interpretant to be a subdivision of the logical interpretant, which is a Third that can be subdivided into an immediate interpretant, a dynamical interpretant and a final interpretant. The energetic interpretant, a Second, can be subdivided into a bodily interpretant and a mental interpretant. The emotional interpretant, a First, cannot be subdivided.

The logical interpretant, the cognitive effect of a sign, is determined by the sign, which in its turn is determined by the object. It may be a thought, a mental sign, yet:

> if this sign be of an intellectual kind [...] it must itself have a logical interpretant; so that it cannot be the *ultimate* logical interpretant of the concept. It can be proved that the only mental effect that can be so produced and that is not a sign but is of general application is a habit-change, meaning by a *habit-change* a modification of a person's tendencies towards action. (CP 5.476, c. 1907)

In other words, each interpretation, in so far as it is not a habit-change, is provisional. It becomes a new sign which can initiate another semiosis which can result in another logical interpretant[9]:

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[9] With regard to this notion, Schuyt comes to two conclusions: 1) the sign or the meaning does not exist and 2) it is impossible to speak of the one and only sign and the one and only interpretation (Schuyt, 1993:28).

> The meaning of a [sign] can be nothing but a [sign]. In fact, it is nothing but the [sign] itself conceived as stripped of irrelevant clothing. But this clothing never can be completely stripped off; it is only changed for something more diaphanous. So there is an infinite regression here. Finally, the interpretant is nothing but another [sign] to which the torch of truth is handed along; and as [sign], it has its interpretant again. Lo, another infinite series. (CP 1.339, undated)

The nature of the logical interpretant is determined by the immediate interpretant, 'a feeling produced by it [the sign] [...] a feeling which we come to interpret as evidence that we comprehend the proper effect of the sign, although the foundation of truth in this is frequently very slight' (CP 5.475, 1907). Actually, the immediate interpretant is 'a mere sign of the interpretability of the sign' (Gorlée, 1993:54). The immediate interpretant, 'the *Quality* of the Impression that the sign is fit to produce' (CP 8.315, 1897/1909), is the qualitative aspect of the sign, a hint of the sign regarding the direction of semiosis. Signs have many such qualities. In (Van Baest & Van Driel, 1995), the name of a composer was mentioned as an example of a quality which can trigger a network of habits and beliefs with regard to that composer's music. These habits and beliefs, which are the result of prior experience with this composer's music, are used to express expectations when confronted with a new composition by that composer, as a result of which the number of directions which semiosis could take decreases.

When semiosis leads to a statement with regard to a particular sign-object relation, an interpretation in the form of a proposition, we are dealing with what Peirce calls the dynamical interpretant, 'the actual effect which the Sign, as a Sign, really determines'. (CP 4.536, 1905) The dynamical interpretant, '[the] effect actually produced on the mind by the Sign' (CP 8.343, 1908) is a 'really occurring interpretative event' (Gorlée, 1993:54). In theory, an infinite number of dynamical interpretants is possible with regard to a particular sign: 'the dynamical interpretant may [...] be characterized by a diversity of viewpoints and shifting of attention' (Gorlée, 1993:54). However, most dynamical interpretants will be pointing in the same direction. This is not only a result of the guiding nature of the immediate interpretant, but also of the existence of a final interpretant.

The final interpretant can be defined as the interpretant in the ideal situation in which consensus regarding knowledge of a phenomenon is reached. It is a form of Thirdness. Other than its name suggests, the final interpretant is a dynamic concept. Final interpretants can be adjusted now and then. Take for example two different editions of a music encyclopedia, where final interpretants regarding music can be found. It will not be hard to find

final interpretants in the latest edition which differ from previous editions. Final interpretants, commonly called 'knowledge', vary in time and culture. *The* final interpretant only exists in some hypothetical future in which consensus could be reached within a certain community.

It is by no means a necessity that semiosis results in a logical interpretant: other effects than a readable account of one's semiosis are possible as well. Semiosis can result in action, in which case we are dealing with an energetic interpretant, which is a form of Secondness. The energetic interpretant can be divided into a physical interpretant and a mental interpretant:

> The effort may be a muscular one [...] but it is much more usually an exertion upon the Inner World, a mental effort. (CP 5.475, c. 1907)

The bodily energetic interpretant is the somatic result of semiosis[10]. The mental energetic interpretant, the 'exertion upon the Inner World', is the feeling one recognizes; it bears upon the different moods which semiosis could lead to, as well as one's attitude.

An energetic interpretant is the actualized emotional interpretant, 'The first proper significate effect of a sign [...]' (CP 5.475, c. 1907). It is an unembodied feeling produced by the sign, and as such it is a form of Firstness. The emotional interpretant 'may amount to much more than that feeling of recognition; and in some cases, it is the only proper significate effect that the sign produces' (ibidem). The notion that the emotional interpretant can be the only proper significate effect of a sign, implies that in certain cases there is no need for a conscious form of semiosis, simply because the sign involved perfectly fits into one of our networks of habits and beliefs.

An emotional interpretant can become an energetic interpretant, which in its turn can become a logical interpretant. A logical interpretant always involves an energetic interpretant, which in its turn always involves an emotional interpretant.

The concept of the interpretant involves Peirce's third trichotomy of rheme, dicisign and argument. A rheme, which is a form of Firstness, is 'a Sign which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of qualitative Possibility, that is, is

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[10] This can best be illustrated with an example derived from the field of musical semiotics. David Lidov argues that music mainly involves muscular action. He presents several examples of this: 'The most common tempo indication in classical music, *Allegro*, means walking, and the comparable common jazz term, swing, is also kinesthetic in reference. [...] A skilled conductor can convey what he requires of an orchestra by silent movements of his hands [...]. All around the globe, music commands and directs the dance' (Lidov, 1987:69).

understood as representing such and such a kind of possible Object' (CP 2.250, 1903). A rheme relation is the most abstract relation between a sign and its interpretant, for it can only be assumed. The rheme 'leaves its Object, and *a fortiori* its Interpretant, to be what it may' (CP 2.95, 1902). It is nothing more than 'an open suggestion with a very slight truth value' (Gorlée, 1993:55). Each sign has a certain signifying quality, but this quality does not have to be related to an interpretant (Van Driel, 1993:46).

On the basis of habits and beliefs, a relation between a sign and its interpretant can be actualized, without the interpretant necessarily being formulated. When an interpretant is formulated, we are no longer dealing with this dyadic relation between a sign and its interpretant, but with the triadic relation between a sign, its object and its interpretant; we call this semiosis. In this case, we are dealing with a dicisign relation, a dicisign (form of Secondness) being 'a Sign, which, for its Interpretant, is a Sign of actual existence' (CP 2.251, 1903). Dicisigns give information about the object. This information, however, is not beyond criticism: 'One subjects oneself to the penalties visited on a liar if the proposition asserted is not true' (CP 8.337, 1904).

Besides rhemes and dicisigns, signs exist that relate to an interpretant by convention. Traffic signs, for example, will be significant in certain traffic situations, and we know this. In the case of a conventional relation between a sign and its interpretant, again without the necessity that the interpretant is formulated, we are dealing with an argument relation. An argument is 'a Sign, which for its Interpretant, is a Sign of law' (CP 2.252, 1903). In an argument relation, habits and beliefs are the basis on which we know that a certain sign can be connected with an interpretant (Van Driel, 1993). An argument involves logical reasoning; it 'should, of the three, be endowed with the highest coefficient of objective truth, since there is nothing in the system to contradict it, and since it is permitted to unfold all its consequences, on all levels' (Gorlée, 1993:56).

An argument, a form of thirdness, always involves a dicisign, which in its turn always involves a rheme. A rheme can become a dicisign; the latter can grow into an argument.

Sign interpretation

Up to now we have dealt with the elements of semiosis (the sign, the object and the interpretant) as a matter on their own and the relation between two of them, resulting in Peirce's three trichotomies of qualisign-sinsign-legisign, icon-index-symbol, and rheme-dicisign-argument. Semiosis involves all three concepts. This triadic relation between sign, object and interpretant will be

dealt with in this section. The central issue here is how a sign can be interpreted on the basis of habits and beliefs. What is important is *how* a sign is interpreted: not what actual interpretation is formulated. Interpretation, or semiosis, is a process in which the habits and beliefs of the sign-user as well as his capacities and limitations play a crucial role, for interpretation is the result of the interaction between these habits and beliefs on the one hand and characteristics of the sign and the context in which it functions on the other. The important role of habits and beliefs, capacities and limitations, not only bears on the sign-user, but also on the scholar who analyzes this sign-user's semiosis: this analysis is a semiosis as well. This implies a fundamental involvement of the researcher in a semiosis. The researcher cannot create a gap between himself and his object of research.

Semiosis is, according to Peirce, a matter of inference and observation (CP 5.392, 1878/1893). Now, because semiosis is a form of Thirdness, it can appear in three modalities: a conscious form, called logical argumentation (Thirdness); a pre-conscious form, called acritical inference (Secondness); and a non-conscious form, called associational suggestions of belief (Firstness) (CP 5.411, 1905). All these modalities are governed by the idea that Peirce considers semiosis as a form of significant acting as a reaction to what seemed to be accepted. Earlier experiences with a certain situation have resulted in the fixation of beliefs regarding that particular situation. A belief is a 'calm and satisfactory state which we do not wish to avoid, or to change to a belief in anything else' (CP 5.372, 1877/1893). In a situation of belief, we know how to act, which of course does not mean that a situation of belief necessarily leads to action. In such a situation it is enough to have knowledge of the imaginable practical consequences of this situation (Van Driel, 1993). However, situations do occur in which we are confronted with a phenomenon we do not know how to deal with. In such situations belief makes place for doubt, 'an uneasy and dissatisfied state from which we struggle to free ourselves and pass into the state of belief' (CP 5.372, 1877/1893). Doubt excites the action of thought; it is the initiator of semiosis (CP 5.394, 1878/1893). However, doubt does not always lead to a semiosis. Only 'if that [doubt] inspires you, you will be sure to examine the instances; while it does not, you will pass them without attention' (CP 5.584, 1898). The phenomenon which causes doubt, which is the phenomenon which does not match some of our habits and beliefs, 'always has an external origin, usually from surprise; [...] it is as impossible for a man to create in himself a genuine doubt by such an act of the will as would suffice to imagine the condition of a mathematical theorem, as it would be for him to give himself a genuine surprise by a simple act of the will' (CP 5.443, c. 1905). The observable aspect of the intriguing phenomenon is the first element of semiosis, the sign, which is determined by the intriguing phenomenon, the

object, which is the second element of semiosis. Logical argumentation leads to a dynamical interpretant— the third element of semiosis.

Logical argumentation is a form of thirdness, which employs Peirce's method of science (CP 5.384, 1877/1893). This method is one of the four methods of inquiry Peirce distinguishes in *The Fixation of Belief* (CP 5.373-387, 1877-1893). Apart from the method of science he distinguishes between the method of tenacity, in which one obstinately sticks to a fixed belief; the method of authority, in which an institution determines what one should believe; and the *a priori* method, in which beliefs are based on that which suits well. Although Peirce considers the method of science as the least bad method of the four, because it is based on an explicit description of the analysis which enhances falsification possibilities, he does not reject the other three methods;

> On the contrary, each has some peculiar convenience of its own. The *a priori* method is distinguished for its comfortable conclusions. [...] The peaceful and sympathetic man will [...] find it hard to resist the temptation to submit his opinions to authority. But most of all I admire the method of tenacity for its strength, simplicitly, and directness. Men who pursue it are distinguished for their decision of character, which becomes very easy with such a mental rule. This is one of the splendid qualities which generally accompany brilliant, unlasting success. (CP 5.386, 1877/1893)

Peirce continues:

> But, above all, let it be considered that what is more wholesome than any particular belief is integrity of belief, and that to avoid looking into the support of any belief from a fear that it may turn out rotten is quite as immoral as it is disadvantageous. (CP 5.387, 1877/1893)

The three other methods do have their merits, especially with topics which are important for mankind (for example, life and death, religion, the solid state); it is even so that 'true science', that is, science which is governed by the rules of logical argumentation and the principles of the method of science, is useless for such vitally important issues. 'True science', Peirce argues, 'is distinctively the study of useless things. For the useful things will get studied without the aid of scientific men' (CP 1.76, c. 1896).

The method Peirce favours, the method of science, consists of the three inferential procedures abduction, deduction and induction.

Abduction

When we are confronted with a surprising phenomenon and if the situation of doubt which this phenomenon raises is inspiring enough to 'examine the instances', the process of enquiry (semiosis) is activated. The stage of abduction[11] is the first stage of inquiry. It 'begins with pondering these phenomena in all their aspects, in the search of some point of view whence the wonder shall be resolved' (CP 6.469, 1908).

Abduction requires imagination: 'When a man desires ardently to know the truth, his first effort will be to imagine what that truth can be' (CP 1.46, 1896). In this first stage of inquiry, the intriguing phenomenon is connected with habits and beliefs, which can lead to an interpretant, a possible explanation regarding the intriguing phenomenon: 'At length a conjecture arises that furnishes a possible Explanation [...]' (CP 6.469, 1908).

The abductive stage has the form of a syllogism:

> The surprising fact, C, is observed;
> But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
> Hence, there is reason to suspect that A is true.
> (CP 5.189, 1903)

Numerous possible explanations or hypotheses which might resolve the situation of doubt can be generated. Which hypothesis should be preferred? In Peirce's work, different answers to this question can be found, which is a result of the development of Peirce's philosophy. One of the last answers Peirce gives to this question can be found in *A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God*. Here Peirce writes:

> [...] it is the simpler Hypothesis in the sense of the more facile and natural, the one that instinct suggests, that must be preferred; [...].
> (CP 6.478, 1908)

The choice of a possible explanation is a commonsense activity: the simpler hypothesis as described by Peirce is the explanation which is most closely related to our habits and beliefs (Van Driel, 1993).

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[11] In the *Collected Papers* three terms are used which seem to refer to the same inferential procedure: hypothesis, abduction and retroduction. According to Wim Staat (Staat, 1991), this has nothing to do with an inconsistent terminology, but with the development of Peirce's philosophy. See also (Murphey, 1993).

With the formulation of a possible explanation of a surprising phenomenon, the stage of abduction, which is a form of Firstness, is ended. When the situation of doubt is inspiring enough, we can now enter the second stage and, if necessary, the third stage of inquiry to test the hypothesis.

Deduction

The second stage of inquiry is called deduction. In this stage, the hypothesis, which is the result of abduction, is examined, that is, the consequences which necessarily follow from the hypothesis are scrutinized:

> [...] the first thing that will be done, as soon as a hypothesis has been adopted, will be to trace out its necessary and probable experiential consequences. This step is *deduction*. (CP 7.203, 1901)

Deduction relies on what we already know: the fixed habits and beliefs. Its syllogistic format:

> a. A has such and such consequences.
> b. If A possibly predicts the surprising phenomenon C,
> c. then those consequences *must* be observable in the context of C.
> (Van Driel, 1993:34)

Deduction, a form of secondness, always involves abduction, which is expressed in step b ('If A possibly predicts the surprising phenomenon C'). It can, but it does not have to, lead to the third stage of inquiry, in which a situation is created in which the consequences that must be observable in the context of C can be observed.

Induction

Whereas the purpose of the second stage of inquiry, deduction, is to collect consequences of the hypothesis, the task of the third stage of inquiry, induction, is that of 'ascertaining how far those consequents accord with Experience, and of judging accordingly whether the hypothesis is sensibly correct, or requires some inessential modification, or must be entirely rejected' (CP 6.472, 1908). In the stage of induction, an experimental setting is created which enables us to observe the predicted consequences. Its format:

> a. A situation is created in the context of C, in which references can be derived from a part of existence in order to observe such and such consequences.
> b. If those consequences can be observed, A might be true.
> c. A *might* be the prediction of C. (Van Driel, 1993:35)

Induction is a form of thirdness, which involves abduction (step a) as well as deduction (step b). The inferential procedure of logical argumentation is finished when the consequences are observed. The hypothesis which should account for the surprising phenomenon is a matter of possibility, not of certainty; it is possible knowledge on the basis of which the original belief can be adjusted (Van Driel, 1993).

Only in situations in which a surprising phenomenon is involved is the conscious form of semiosis, logical argumentation, employed. In other situations, nothing is wrong and we can act unconsciously and preconsciously on the basis of a belief. According to Peirce, a belief is a special instance of a habit:

> Readiness to act in a certain way under given circumstances and when actuated by a given motive is a habit; and a deliberate, or self-controlled, habit is precisely a belief. (CP 5.480, c. 1907)

This raises the question how we can distinguish between a habit and a belief. Peirce does not answer this question, but Hans van Driel (Van Driel, 1993) connects a belief to the inferential procedure acritical inference and a habit to the procedure associational suggestions of belief.

Acritical inference

When not being confronted with a surprising phenomenon, we live and act according to our beliefs. All signs which constitute the environment which we deal with in a harmonic way have the status of possible signs or qualisigns (Van Driel, 1993). In such a situation we are aware of the inferential character of our acts:

> There are [...] cases in which we are conscious that a belief has been determined by another given belief, but are not conscious that it proceeds on any general principle. [...] Such a process should be called, not a reasoning, but an *acritical inference*. (CP 5.441, 1905)

The general principle which Peirce mentions here, is 'a proposition of which the antecedent should describe all possible premises upon which it could operate, while the consequent should describe how the conclusion to which it would lead would be determinately related to those premises' (CP 2.588, 1901). In the case of acritical inference, the general principle is active, not as an explicit rule, but as a part of our everyday logic, which we deal with in a pre-conscious way. In a situation of pre-consciousness we might be aware of something, for example, the pre-conscious way in which we deal with grammatical rules.

The result of an acritical inference can be called a perceptual judgement (Van Driel, 1993). Peirce connects those two concepts as follows:

> [...] the perceptive judgement is the result of a process, although of a process not sufficiently conscious to be controlled or, to state it more truly, not controllable and therefore not fully conscious. (CP 5.181, 1903)

A perceptual judgement is closely related to an abductive judgement. The main difference between the two concepts is that 'we cannot form the least conception of what it would be to deny the perceptual judgement' (CP 5.186, 1903). So, perceptual judgements are extreme cases of abductive inferences. The only way in which the two differ from each other is that perceptual judgements are absolutely beyond criticism (ibidem).

Associational suggestions of belief

'There are cases in which one belief is determined by another, without our being at all aware of it. These should be called associational suggestions of belief' (CP 5.441, 1905). This inferential procedure is connected with a situation of habit. In such a situation we are neither aware of its inferential character nor of one of its general principles. The result of an associational suggestion of belief can be called a percept (Van Driel, 1993). When Peirce deals with percepts, he states that 'it seems as completely beyond the control of rational criticism as any percept is' (CP 5.183, 1903). The percept is part of our common knowledge, which is, like all accepted knowledge, an element of habit.

It was noted that Peirce employs a sometimes seemingly inscrutable language. His introduction of new terms and complex ideas certainly contributes to this. In the foregoing discussion of Peirce's thought, I aimed at presenting these concepts and terms in such a way that it might become clear to the reader what they stand for. However, the best way of dealing with new terms

and concepts is to illustrate how they could function in a real situation; in this case within the context of a semiotical analysis of a musical composition. This will be done in the following section.

Semiotic analysis of Chopin's *Nocturne*, op. 48 nr. 1

When being confronted with this *Nocturne* it will be recognized as a musical composition. It is the kind of music most of us are familiar with. This is the result of the rather conventional arrangement of musical devices like melody, rhythm and harmony. Being a conventional sign, this composition can be called a legisign. A legisign, as we have seen, is an instance of thirdness. As such, it contains sinsigns, forms of secondness, and qualisigns, which belong to the domain of firstness. The framework of the legisign encompasses numerous qualisigns: we do not know the composition yet, and therefore we do not have any expectations regarding the musical contents of the *Nocturne* other than those as indicated by the name of the composer and the genre of the composition.

The first musical event we encouter has the nature of a sinsign. We find a freely flowing lyrical melody accompanied by a steady harmonic progression in quarter notes. After four bars, a conclusion occurs in the form of a cadence. Although this is the first time a cadence occurs here, it is not so much a sinsign, as a legisign: we are so familiar with this harmonic formula that we consider it as a sign. Furthermore, this legisign is automatically interpreted as being the end of a musical phrase: we 'know' that this particular harmonic progression of IV-V-I confirms the key of the phrase and concludes it. In the relation of this sign to its interpretant, the cadence therefore is an argument, a sign which automatically evokes a particular effect on behalf of the sign user.

Because of the appearance of the cadence, the musical phrase that is concluded by it loses its state of secondness and becomes a legisign as well. The phrase with which the composition started and which is ended by the cadence has planted itself in our minds as the beginning of Chopin's *Nocturne Op. 48 Nr. 1*(Figure 2.2). The way in which Chopin has organized the musical devices in this first phrase determines our perception of the remainder of the composition. It decreases the number of possible directions into which the *Nocturne* could develop. In other words: the number of qualisigns decreases dramatically. However, at the same time we know that composers are inclined to give their compositions a certain twist which can be totally overwhelming. Such a twist is the actualization of one of many qualisigns. Because it is not yet embodied as a sinsign all we can do is guess. However, it is likely

that such a thing will happen somewhere in this *Nocturne*. Therefore, we remain in a situation of acritical inference, and in this state of preconsciousness we prepare ourselves for the imminent surprise.

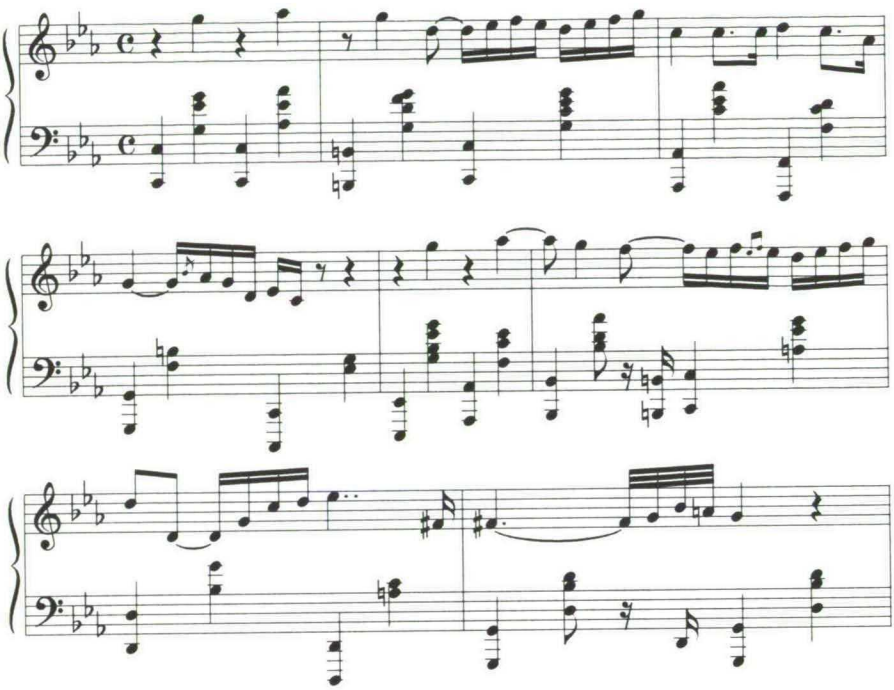

Figure 2.2

The first divergence from the expected direction of this *Nocturne* occurs in bar 25 (Figure 2.3). Differences occur at three levels. The new part, let us call it part B, is slower than the first part, A (*Poco più lento*). It is also softer: *sotto voce* instead of *mezza voce* in part A. The main difference, however, lies in the fact that the melody seems to have adopted the movement in quarter notes of the accompaniment of the first part. The melody has disposed of the freely flowing character it originally had. Although this is a major difference with the first part, this 'surprise' is not a big enough surprise to really startle a listener. It is not strong enough to change our state of belief into a state of doubt that should be overcome by logical argumentation. Instead, what happens at best is that our expectations about the occurrence of a 'twist' have been met. We take notice of these changes, and because they are identified and interpreted as changes of the previous musical material they are sinsigns as well as dicisigns.

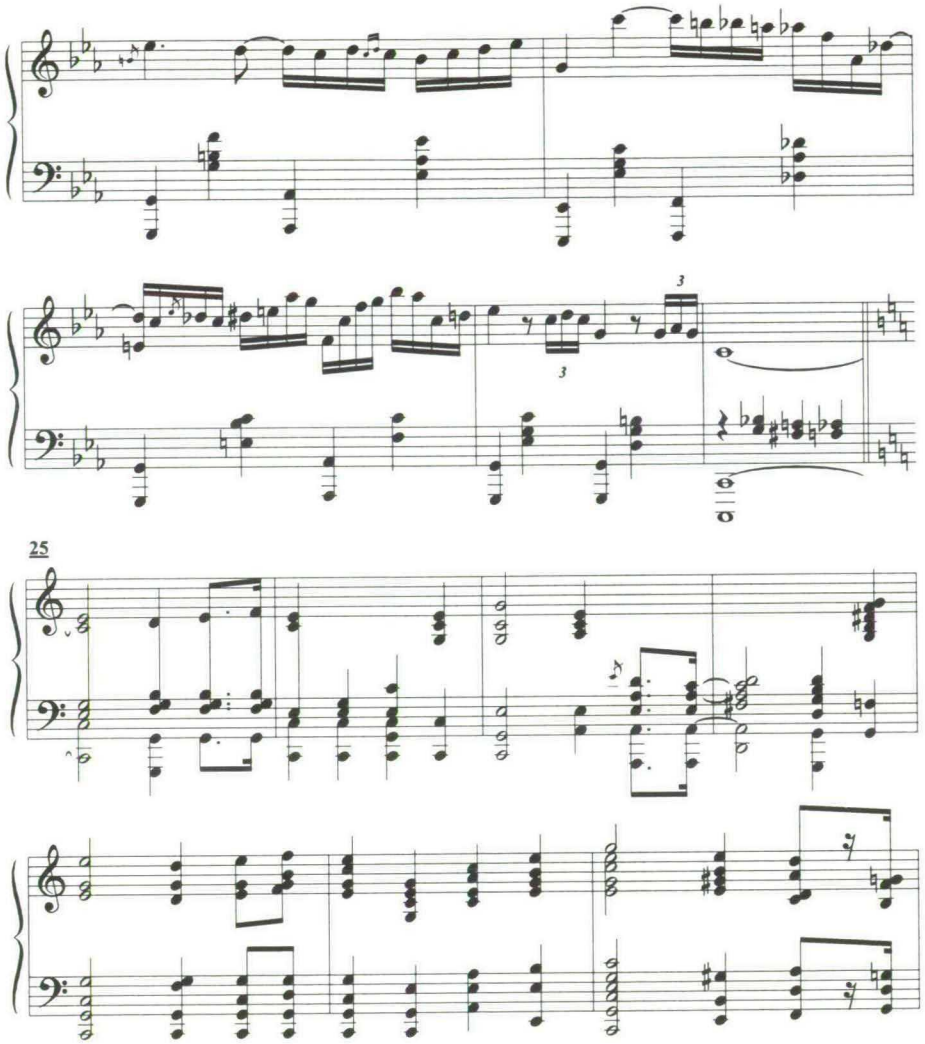

Figure 2.3

After this short mental excercise, we continue listening in a state of acritical inference— until we arrive at this (Figure 2.4):

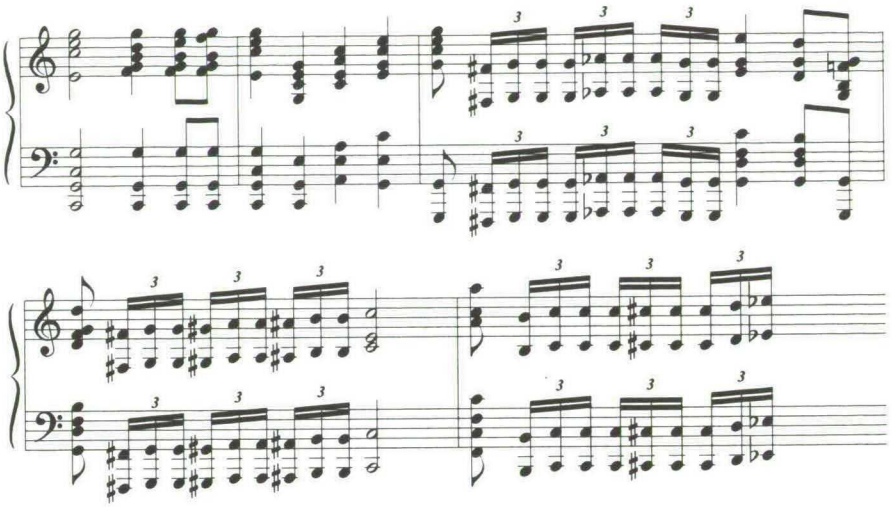

Figure 2.4

Here, new elements are introduced: sixteenth triplets are being played in parallel octaves. Besides one incidental occurrence of sixteenth triplets in part A, both elements are completely new. On the basis of the listening experience as created by this composition so far, the occurrence of these new elements by no means could have been predicted. At its first appearance, this new musical motive has the character of a recurrent intrusion on the flow of part B, for after three groups of sixteenth triplets it seems as if nothing has happened and part B continues just as it began. It feigns being a sinsign. However, the new motive continues to grow, and eventually it assumes the role of protagonist: it becomes a legisign. Only once is an attempt made to break this brutal assumption of power— without success: the intruder affirms its leading position in three measures which conclude the second part of this *Nocturne*. In fact, the intruder appears to be so strong that it stays present in the remainder of the composition: although part three picks up the melody of the first part, the accompaniment is permanently affected by the intruder of part two (Figure 2.5). No longer does the accompaniment of this melody move in quarter notes. Instead, it consists of a sequence of broken chords in triplets of eighth notes, which as a result of the indication *Doppio movimento* (double speed) equals the sixteenth triplets of part two. This continues until the last measure but two when a short coda is introduced.

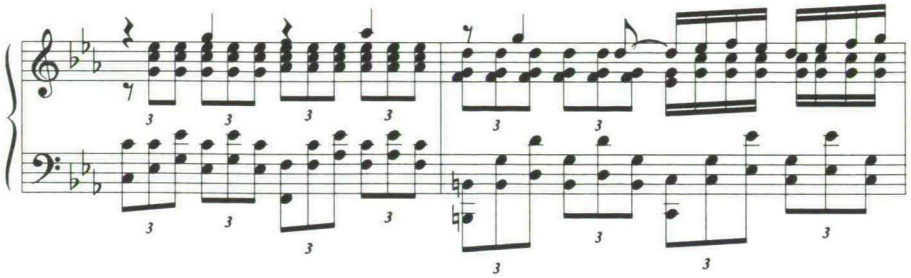

Figure 2.5

The intrusion in the second part of this *Nocturne* appears to have a great impact on the composition, and as such it cannot be ignored. Actually, its first entrance is of such an overwhelming nature that it startles us and calls for some logical argumentation so as to change the state of doubt in which it puts us into a state of belief. For this purpose, the method of science with its inferential procedures of abduction, deduction and induction will be applied.

This description of the structure of Chopin's Nocturne actually belongs to the domain of abduction: abduction involves in the first place a description of the nature of the intriguing sign. As we have seen, the doubt-causing sign consists of sixteenth triplets in parallel octaves. It gave rise to logical argumentation because of its being strikingly different from the foregoing musical structure. What we need is an explanation for this phenomenon. Although the contrast as created by the intriguing sign is rather strong and alienating, it is a typical feature of art forms which are created under the influence of romanticism. Romanticism, by its very nature, is about such contrasts or dualisms. In the romantic era, the nineteenth century, the relation between a composer and his audience was one of the many sources of such extreme contrasts. On the one hand, the composer needed an audience in order to be able to make a living out of composing. On the other hand, many romantic composers did not take their audience into account at all, as had previously been done, but they wrote music for an imaginary intended audience (Grout & Palisca, 1994:618). This and other dualisms affected all romantic art forms, including music, which may lead us to the hypothesis that the striking phenomenon in Chopin's *Nocturne* could be a trace of a romantic dualism that is somehow embodied in this composition. If this explanation is true, then according to the rules of deduction the consequence is that it must be possible to retrieve both ends of the romantic dualism within the context of this *Nocturne*. And is it? This is the point where induction comes in.

In the first part, all attention is directed towards the melody. The accompaniment is relatively unimportant; all it seems to do is provide the Noc-

turne with a harmonic flow. So, all that we have to be concerned with is the melody. In the abductive analysis it was characterized as freely flowing and lyrical. It leaves the impression of improvisation, of a musical *fantasia*. In combination with the minor key as confirmed by the accompaniment and the slow tempo (*Lento*) it can be said that the melody is bathing in melancholy. This iconical relation between the sign (the melody) and its object (melancholy) seems to be confirmed by the quarter rests in the first measure, which give the notes that follow them the character of sighs. These sighs further determine the nature of the melody as an iconic sign: it can be characterized as a sign of melancholic longing. The overall structure of part I (A-B-A) indicates the form of a song. Thus the first part is a song of melancholic longing; it is also an element of the romantic dualism that is at issue here.

The melody in the second part has, as already noticed, disposed of the freely flowing character of its predecessor. No longer is it a sign of melancholic longing; instead, because of its slow movement in combination with its major key, it can be characterized as resignation. This is the second part of the dualism. The beginning of this second part is at once peaceful and quiet, whereas its movement in mainly half notes and quarter notes seems to be hinting towards an aspect of solemnity as well. In one word, it can be considered as a hymn. After fourteen bars, the sixteenth triplets enter the stage, thereby disturbing the progression of the hymn. The gradual crescendo of the intruders from *piano* to *fortissimo* suggests that they appear out of nothingness. It seems as if here someone's innermost feelings rebel against the hymn's peaceful resignation. They are tempestuous and fierce, and eventually they take over control. At the end of the second part all seems calm again. However, the sixteenth triplets do not fade away: in the third part of the Nocturne they join the song of melancholic longing of the first part and act as its accompaniment. As a result of its new accompaniment, the song is no longer melancholic but passionate and much more intense. In the last bar but two the melody tries to run away from all that is happening (a kind of *Weltflucht* perhaps?), however without success: with three firm chords of c minor the *Nocturne* is ended, a tragic return to reality.

This analysis of Chopin's *Nocturne* Opus 48 Nr. 1, as an example of how Peircean terminology functions in a semiotical analysis of music, concludes this introduction to the fundamentals of Peirce's semiotics. Now let us return to signification in opera; that is what this book is about. Opera is defined here as the combination of music and text. The copresence of these two sign-systems demands the development of a semiotics of opera which takes this specific feature into account. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS A SEMIOTICS OF OPERA

Opera as a sign

Opera was invented at the beginning of the seventeenth century by a group of Florentine humanists, who called themselves *Camerata*. As already mentioned in chapter 1, the Camerata pursued a new music; this new music had to be governed by the same principles which, in the eyes of the Camerata, formed the basis of the music which accompanied performances of Greek tragedy in its early days. Although sources do exist which support the idea that performance of tragedies in the early days not only involved speech and acting, but also music and singing, not much empirical evidence has survived from ancient Greek society and culture which could be used to falsify the inferences as drawn by the Camerata. And to be honest, this actually does not matter. What is important about the activities of the Camerata is the fact that they left us a new art form, an art form for which Greek tragedy was initially taken as its fundament. When dealing with the nature of this new art form, of opera, it might be helpful to take the fundamentals of Greek tragedy as dealt with by Aristotle in his *Poetics* into account.

'Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents', Aristotle writes. He conceives of tragedy as an art form the essential quality of which is imitation. The objects of such imitation are always 'men in action' (Aristotle, 1996). What matters most in tragedy is plot. Plot is defined as 'the arrangement of the incidents' or 'action' (ibidem). This action has to be a whole, 'the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed' (ibidem). Three elements of action are discerned: Reversal of the Situation, Recognition, and the Scene of Suffering. 'Recognition, as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. [...] Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. [...] The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like' (ibidem). These three elements also form the main elements of the action in many operas, and especially the Scene of Suffering has proven to be appealing to many librettists, composers— and audiences too.

As in tragedy the plot is most essential, so it is in opera— calling to mind the words of Gary Schmidgall as quoted in chapter 1 that librettists focus on this dimension. In modern theories of the dramatic text, action is defined as the transition of a situation to another (cf. Pfister, 1977); it is a series of events in which the concept of change plays a crucial role (cf. Elam, 1980). Events always presuppose a character being either actively or passively involved; the concept of action is inextricably bound up with the notion of character. In situations in which the characters play an active role in the event, our conception of what is happening is influenced by the way in which the characters present this event. Their view of the dramatic world in which they live and which they constitute, determines our view of this same world. This is an important notion when considering that constructing a dramatic world is generally considered to be the task of the subject: 'The spectator is called upon not only to employ a specific *dramatic* competence [...] but also to work hard and continuously at piecing together into a coherent structure the partial and scattered bits of dramatic information that he receives from different sources' (ibidem:98/99). For this construction of the dramatic world, the subject must rely on information he gets from different sources. These sources are the development of the action in time and space, and the already mentioned presentation of the action by the characters[1]. But how does this work? What procedures are followed by the reader to construct this dramatic world? Put in semiotic terms: how are interpretants formed in the case of the operatic sign? In this chapter, the fundamentals of a semiotic theory of signification in opera are presented. The presupposition of this theory is that semiosis is an interactive process in which both the sign and the sign user perform specific tasks. Consequently, this chapter will focus on both determinants in the process of signification. We will begin by determining how the sign contributes to this process. This sign, that is, opera, is a syncretism, which means that it is a sign that is constituted by the conjoining of other signs, in this case libretto and music. Analyzing a syncretism necessarily involves analysis of its embedded signs, for they contribute in their own particular way to the signification process. Once we have clearer insight to the nature of their contribution to signification the togetherness of these signs can be analyzed. So, we will first deal with opera as a syncretism; subsequently, attention will be focused on the role of the subject in semiosis of the opera.

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[1] Note that an important source, as it functions in non-dramatic literary texts, the narrator, is often absent in dramatic texts, and as a result 'werden die Möglichkeiten, eine Figur in ihrer biographisch-genetischen Dimension und im Innenraum ihres Bewußtseins darzustellen, reduziert' (Pfister, 1977:223). The reader can only rely on the sources as presented here.

'Eine Oper ist die Ausfertigung einer dramatischen Handlung in musikalischen Formen zum Zwecke der szenischen Darstellung durch Sänger' (Hacks, 1976:211). This definition by the German author and librettist Peter Hacks contains three elements which constitute opera: 'dramatischen Handlung' (dramatic action), 'musikalischen Formen' (musical forms), 'szenischen Darstellung' (scenic presentation). Music is explicitly mentioned in this definition, but where does it leave the other two elements of the genre; libretto and staging? As Peter Hacks suggests, the libretto as a medium is incorporated into the concept of dramatic action. Hacks: 'Das allgemeinste Gesetz jeglicher Bühnenkunst lautet: eine Handlung wird Szene. Zwei Bestandteile— Fabel und Darstellung— sind an ihr notwendig. [...] im Begriff Fabel ist Wort einbeschlossen' (ibidem:212-213)[2]. So, dramatic action depends on the existence of the libretto. It provides the fundaments of the dramatic action which is worked out in more detail in the music, or, in more general terms, which is paralleled by a musical depiction of this dramatic action. 'Darstellung', the presentation of the story, therefore not only belongs to the domain of the libretto, but it belongs to the realm of the music as well. And how about staging? Although operas are usually being performed on stage, that is, with the involvement of theatrical techniques, the position as taken here is that staging does not constitute an essential part of opera. This is reflected in the position it occupies in the production process. A typical production process of an opera begins with the conception of the libretto. The second step in this process is the composition of the music on the basis of the libretto, which results in what is commonly called 'the opera': the conjoining of libretto and music. Staging is the result of a director's interpretation of this opera; therefore, it does not belong to the opera proper. Consequently, when analyzing the narrative dimension of opera, one has to focus on the opera; it is not required to also take its staging into account for a proper understanding of the opera (cf. Short, 1998). The operatic sign is the copresence of libretto and music, and staging should be considered an interpretant of this composite sign instead of being a part of it.

An opera is constituted by the conjoining of libretto and music; these are the two signs involved in opera. By defining the opera text as such, we arrive at an important notion when dealing with opera from a semiotic point of view: we are not dealing with one semiotic system, but with a semiotic sys-

[2] Hacks uses the term *Fabel*, but it means something different than the term *fabula* as introduced by the Russian Formalists: the latter refers to the result of the subject's interpretation process, whereas Hacks' *Fabel* refers to the written part of drama as opposed to its element of staging ('Darstellung').

tem which is a compound of two constituting signs which enter into a function with each other. Such a compound is called a syncretism. In this case, the syncretic relation between libretto and music is at issue. Usually, it is assumed that in this particular combination the music interprets the libretto, a conception that results from a production oriented approach as described above: in the beginning was the libretto, then the composer set the words to music and as a result the opera was born. David Mosley describes this process more elegantly (figure 3.1). Regarding the relation between text and music in general, he writes:

> a poetic representamen determines an interpretant which is at once an equivalent or more developed sign than the poetic representamen and able to become a musical representamen determining its own triadic relationship. (Mosley, 1990:16)

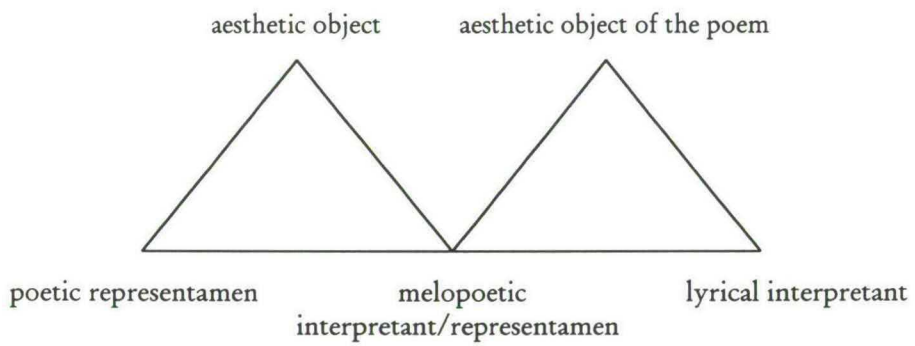

Figure 3.1

The melopoetic interpretant/representamen is the interpretant of the poetic representamen; it is a poetic interpretant and becomes a musical sign. This change from word to tone is called *intersemiotic transmutation*, a concept Mosley derived from Roman Jakobson. To put it differently: the poetic representamen initiates semiosis, the interpretant of which is the composer's musical setting of the text.

Mosley's model, as already said, a model that reflects the common sense idea regarding the relation text-music, may apply to the production of vocal music, but from a pragmatic point of view this model falls short. Pragmatism, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is concerned with the actual effect of a sign on its user. Following Peirce, this effect is the meaning of the sign. It is true that a sign-user perceives a syncretic sign system like opera as a whole; that is, there is no need for a sign-user to consciously take into account

the sign's syncretic character. But because any production of meaning is to a great extent guided by the sign, and because in the case of a syncretic sign system these guides are the constituting signs, a model which is to account for semiosis of a syncretic sign system should express this sign system's structure more precisely. It should give insight into the nature of the syncretism. According to William Dougherty (Dougherty, 1993), this syncretism is basically determined by a play of interpretants. It is not the poetic interpretant which becomes the more developed sign, but the interaction between poetic and musical interpretants (figure 3.2).

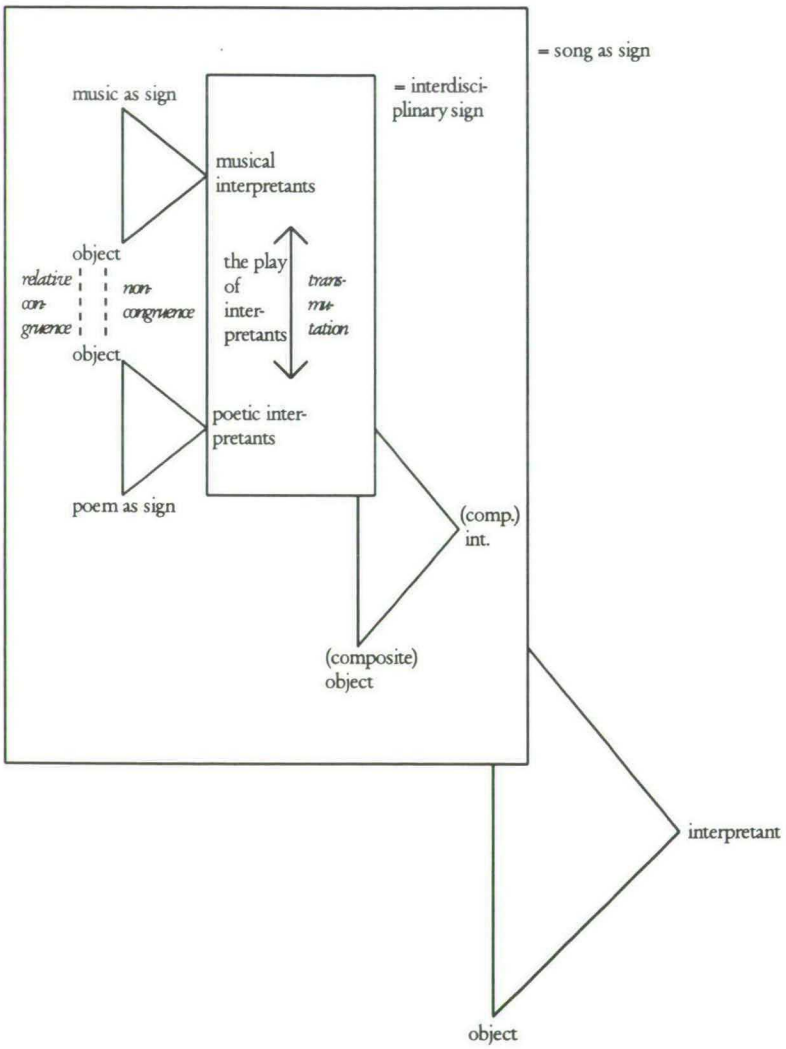

Figure 3.2

Dougherty's model has some advantages over Mosley's. In the first place, it accounts for situations of non-congruence between the objects of text and music, whereas Mosley's model does not deal with this explicitly. In the second place, Dougherty starts from the idea that in such a syncretism text and music are equal: vocal music is the conjunction of text and music, and it is not just a matter of putting words to music. There is no predominancy of either music or libretto. The method that is used for analysis should reflect the equality between both sign systems in the sense that it should be a method that is capable of dealing with both libretto and music in more or less the same way. A semiotic approach has the advantage that it approaches its research object by definition as a sign, and when it comes down to the semiotic procedures that are involved in semiosis, it assumes that in its deepest essence different signs behave in the same way. It does not matter whether we are dealing with a musical or a literary semiosis. Basically, both appearances of semiosis involve the same semiotic procedures of abduction, deduction and induction. As far as the semiotic procedures that are involved in semiosis is concerned, libretto and music do not differ from each other. However, on the level of these signs' syntactical organization, the representamen, differences do occur. Each representamen consists of a number of elements which are specific to that representamen. It is because of the existence of these elements that we can distinguish between literary signs and musical signs: between libretto and music.

The libretto as a sign

Opera is an art form the nucleus of which is dramatic action. The fundaments of this dramatic action are layed out in the libretto. Without a libretto there cannot be an opera. However, although the libretto is the major power source for the opera, 'libretto-bashing' (Groos, 1988:2) has been a popular sport among critics, composers and audiences because of its alleged inferior qualities—or, as Arthur Groos writes: 'Most listeners appreciate *Songs Without Words*; many demonstrably prefer "operas without words"' (ibidem:1). This systematical undervaluation of the libretto is to a great extent inspired by the fact that it is often incorrectly considered as a literary genre which is to be judged by either literary and poetical qualities or according to the aesthetics of Aristotelian drama. With regard to the latter it will be argued hereafter that the libretto is not a form of Aristotelian but of epic drama; with this position I follow Albert Gier (Gier, 1998). With regard to judging the libretto for its poetic or literary qualities, it is true that most libretti apply features which are derived from poetry, especially metre and rhyme, but applying these tech-

niques does not automatically make the libretto into a literary text. The use of poetic qualities does not determine the nature of the libretto; what does, are its dramatic qualities. Therefore, the libretto should not be dealt with as a literary art form; instead, it is a dramatic art form which occasionally employs poetic features as one of its vehicles for presenting its subject matter, that is, dramatic action.

It could be said that the libretto is a dramatic art form which is meant to be staged— to be seen by an audience. However, before staging is possible, the libretto requires to have been read; how else could a director know what he is supposed to stage? Dealing with the libretto as a sign therefore involves a literary semiosis, and this is what we will focus on. It is the reader's task to create a rendering of the dramatic world on the basis of what the libretto presents. This dramatic world is not immediately present in the text, but it is the result of semiosis— it is an interpretant. The reader arrives at this interpretant by making assumptions, inferences, and by drawing and testing hypotheses through the inferential procedures of abduction, deduction and induction. The information on the basis of which the reader formulates his interpretant is presented in the libretto as a sign which, in its turn, is semantically determined by its object. It involves dramatic action, that is, the information as provided by the libretto is information about the action and its agents. On the basis of this temporal and spatial order of the events, and the characters that are involved in these events, the reader constructs his interpretant.

The libretto is an art form which is subject to historically, culturally and geographically determined conceptions regarding the nature of opera: Meyerbeer's *grand opéra* differs from Lully's *tragédie lyrique*, which in turn seems to have little in common with literary operas like *Wozzeck* and *Pelléas et Mélisande* or the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Such variable conceptions of the genre not only have their impact on the dramatic action as presented in the libretto, they are also reflected in the formal dimensions of the sign, that is, the representamen. Dealing with the libretto as a sign would therefore involve a thorough study of its history, and would require a critical account of its historically determined formal differences. Such a task lies beyond the scope of the present study; the interested reader is referred to (Smith, 1970) and (Gier, 1998). Here, the historical approach will not be followed. Departing from the position that the libretto is a narrative art form that is mainly concerned with action and its agents, we will concentrate on the question as to what constitutes the narrative of opera librettos in general, leaving aside historical variations and subtleties.

Aristotelian drama (tragedy) focuses on the unities of time, action, and place; furthermore, it is concerned with logically and causally related scenes, and it strives at a resolution of the catastrophe. Operatic drama as it is

rooted in the libretto, however, deviates from this dramatic form. The temporal structure of most librettos is discontinuous, that is, the unity of time is confined within a scene, and does not apply to the whole of the libretto. As a result, each scene is a closed and relatively autonomous unity. Furthermore, librettos show sharp contrasts between story time, the amount of time an event really takes, and text time, the amount of time the description of an event takes in the text: whereas in case of the recitative it can be said that both more or less coincide, 'in der Arie oder im Ensemble [wird] der Zeitverlauf gedehnt bis zum Extrem des Stillstands' (ibidem:7). The same kind of 'anarchy' can be found on the level of action. Aristotelian drama confines itself to the imitation of one action, leaving aside all non-relevant mental or physical side issues. Although opera librettos also concentrate on one central action, that is an action which has a beginning and an ending that shows the protagonist in an altered state, the intermediate scenes, which describe the process as followed by the protagonist, do not confine themselves merely to what is relevant, but they frequently abound in sometimes rather extensive descriptions of different side-issues (some excellent examples of this practice can be found in the genre of Venetian opera). Albert Gier: 'Zahlreichen Texten liegt eine zentrale Opposition zugrunde, die in unterschiedlichen Figuren verkörpert und in der Situationenfolge des Syntagmas von allen Seiten beleuchtet wird' (ibidem:9). These characteristics allow us to designate the libretto not as a form of Aristotelian but of epic drama, 'eine Dramaturgie, die all diese [=Aristotelian, AvB] Anweisungen außer acht läßt, d.h., die Handlung dehnt sich frei aus in Raum und Zeit, sie folgt nicht den Gesetzen der handlungskausalität; die Szenentechnik unterliegt dem Prinzip der Reihung un der Selbständigkeit der einzelnen Teile' (Kesting, 1978:10).

Most librettos take epic drama as their basic formal model. Although this dramatic form differs from Aristotelian drama, both resort to the same elements, as it comes down to settling their narrative dimension: both need to employ actions and their agents to constitute a plot, plot being the nucleus of these dramatic forms. A plot can be reduced to an overall structure of beginning-middle-end. The beginning involves the introduction of the main characters and the temporal and spatial setting of the narrative, as well as an explanation of the state of affairs: the exposition. Expositions deal with what Edward Branigan calls existents, elements 'which assert the existence of something' (Branigan, 1998:5). When starting reading, our narrative schemata instruct us to look for these existents and how they are related to each other. These existents will function as beacons throughout the remainder of the narrative as we, for example, decide to follow the trajectory of the protagonist— let us say, Aïda. This decision to follow her and not one of the other characters as presented in the exposition is also inspired by schemata: the title of the opera

carries Aïda's name, and one of the schemata involved in reading tells us to pay special attention to the title as a carrier of valuable information for story comprehension. In its turn, the title *Aïda* may trigger many other schemata which could be of strategic importance for semiosis, for example 'opera', 'Verdi', 'impossible love', 'jealousy' and 'pharao'.

As soon as we have found out that we are actually reading a libretto here, and that might occur rather early in the reading process with a subtitle such as *Opera in quattro atti*, the schema 'opera' is triggered. Information that is stored in this schema bears upon a wide range of subjects as related to the art form. One of them is the typical narrative structure of operatic discourse: two characters love each other, but this love is somehow obstructed, usually by the disruptive interference of a third party, whose intrigues lead to a reversal of the situation (peripeteia) as a result of which the love affair comes to a tragic end with the downfall of one of the two lovers (or both). The reader imposes this typical operatic beginning-middle-end structure on the libretto in the reading process. Information as provided by the libretto is constantly being evaluated in the light of this schema. Not only does it involve existents, the operatic schema is about processes as well: the initial situation is altered during the opera, and alteration is by definition a process. Processes, according to Branigan, 'stipulate a change or process under a causal formula' (ibidem). These processes take the shape of action. Action is the key concept in the narrative of opera. Earlier it was defined as a series of events in which the concept of change plays a crucial role. Action disrupts the state of equilibrium as presented in the exposition, and because action forms the logical and causal bridge between the initial situation and the end situation, this is what the reader is interested in. Readers want to know what happened and why, they are not satisfied with a narrative structure that does not account for the action that is responsible for the perceived differences between the beginning and the ending of the text. Imagine, for example, a libretto without such action— it would be considered as highly unsatisfactory and uninteresting because the reader is burdened with too many loose ends. What if Verdi's *Aïda* would be devoid of any action? What would remain is the following: Aïda and Radamès love each other, but this is an impossible love, Aïda being a slave and the daughter of the Ethiopian king, Radamès being a captain in the Egyptian army who is loved by Amneris, the daughter of the Egyptian king (the begin situation); due to some unknown developments (the middle part), in the end, both Aïda and Radamès die (the final situation). This is what can be considered as the opera's plot, and anyone who has seen, heard or read some operas knows that it is a plot the basics of which are shared by the majority of all operatic works— it is a narrative macro-structure which seems to be fundamental to the genre. Anyone who is confronted with this plot will be eager to

find out what exactly happens in the middle part, and will ask both himself and the discourse questions like: what is Amneris' role in this tragic love story, why do Aïda and Radamès have to die, how are the Egyptian and the Ethiopian kings involved in the downfall of the two protagonists? In other words: what is the opera's intrigue, what constitutes its action? This is what opera readers want to gain knowledge about, this is what operatic semiosis is about: reconstructing the cause-and-effect chain of different events that eventually leads to the final situation. The overall structure which goes from fortune to misfortune does not really matter anymore, it has become part of the competent readers' collective memory or, in Peircean terminology, belief: we know that an opera is to follow such and such a path, so why bother? It only matters when the discourse deviates significantly from this macro-structure. As long as this does not happen, what we are most interested in is the middle part of the narrative macro-structure: the opera's action. Action is the arrangement of the incidents, which together are responsible for the disruption of the initial state of equilibrium. These incidents or events take place in a particular time-space constellation, and they involve characters.

Characters

It has been said that it is the reader's task to construct an interpretant; the reader's view on this libretto's dramatic world. During the reading process, the reader is provided with information which is brought to him through different sources. This information has to be evaluated. Besides the reader's knowledge of the world which is projected on the dramatic world, a second criterion for evaluating the information which can be used for constructing the dramatic world is the credibility of a character. If a character has a high degree of credibility in the eyes of a reader, the more likely it is that the information as provided by this character will be positively evaluated and incorporated in the interpretant. On the other hand, when a character is considered as untrustworthy, his information will be negatively evaluated. So, the value of character-based information is determined by the perceived credibility of the character. Character perception in turn depends heavily on the way in which characters are depicted in the dramatic text.

In the libretto, a character can be depicted in three ways: by what he does, by what he says and by what other characters say about him. Furthermore, when reading a libretto other information is available as well: the information on the characters as contained in the author's stage directions. A reader's perception of a character is not of a static nature, but instead it is a process which changes continuously on the basis of the information provided.

But of what nature is the information about the characters the reader is provided with? Not only do we receive information on the physical appearance of the character and his main traits, but also on his intention in acting and the action's purpose. Although intention and purpose seem to be one of a kind, there is a difference. According to Teun van Dijk, 'Whereas an intention has the action itself as it scope, a purpose will be taken as a mental event in which an agent represents the goal(s) of the action' (Van Dijk, 1980:174).

The intention of an action refers to the plans one has made beforehand to perform a particular action without considering what goals the action should serve, whereas the purpose of an action refers to the planned effect of the action. In dramatic texts both concepts are closely related: characters usually intend to perform an action because they have a specific goal or purpose in mind which can only be achieved by performing a particular action. In Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, for example, Alberich intends to steal the Rhinegold and to make a ring out of it. This intention can only emerge from the purpose he pursues, namely to obtain absolute power (he who posesses the ring and rejects love gains absolute power). However, although Alberich succeeds in obtaining the gold and making a ring out of it, he does not achieve his goal, for the gods Wotan and Loge trick Alberich out of his ring. An event as performed by an character can succeed on the level of its intention, whereas the purpose can remain unsuccessful.

Events: time

Characters can perform events actively or undergo them passively. Events are complex elements which involve a temporal as well as a spatial dimension. As far as time is concerned, in dramatic texts like the libretto we are dealing with linear time which makes the libretto into a real-time text in which events unfold chronologically. Although dramatic action, the succession of these events, takes place *hic et nunc*, this does not mean that the past and the future are out of sight. Most librettos have a discontinuous temporal structure the unity of which is confined within the boundaries of a scene. As pointed out by Albert Gier this is a direct consequence of the fact that the libretto mirrors 'die *Wirklichkeit des inneren Lebens*' (Gier, 1998:8), which is not subject to the laws of time. Gier: 'Gegensätzliche Empfindungen, heterogene Erinnerungsfragmente sind im Bewußtsein gelichzeitig präsent; Gedanken "machen Sprünge", auch im Traum ist der unvermittelte Übergang von einer Vorstellung (einem Bild) zu einer anderen nicht ungewöhnlich' (ibidem). What must be kept in mind is that these temporal distortions always take place within the real-time unfolding of the *hic et nunc* of the plot: what we read in the libretto

is situated here and now. We as readers are made to believe that what is happening in the libretto is actually taking place before our eyes, and we want to believe this— which is the essence of drama. So we are made into eyewitnesses of a world which is not ours, but which at the same time reflects the world we know so well. This is not to say that past and future do not play a role in the dramatic world of the libretto: characters and events happen to be determined by their past and they determine their future by the choices they make. Occassionally we are granted a look at the character's past: if it is actually incorporated in the libretto's *hic et nunc*, when explicit references are being made to these places in the past, or when the past is recalled for whatever purpose. This information is used in the construction of an interpretant only to the extent that we decide that such knowledge can be of any use for this purpose. On the other hand, when necessary, we even might explicitly search for references to a character's past because our interpretant demands some knowledge of previous events, whereas the libretto does not seem to provide us with any clues on this matter, that is, when there is an information gap which needs to be filled before we can complete the task imposed on us.

The order of the events belongs to the temporal dimension of action. Besides order, this dimension also involves duration and frequency. Events can last for only some seconds, minutes or hours, but they can also encompass a period of some months or even years. This, however, is not the main issue when dealing with duration on the level of constructing an interpretant. What is important is the event's relative length as perceived by the reader. Events can be either short or long. These are relative values: an event can only be called short or long in contrast to another event. Absolute 'longness' and 'shortness' do not exist. When appearing in a context of events which encompass a rather large length of time, an event which breaks this temporal continuity by lasting only for some seconds will attract the reader's attention; as a consequence, this event is likely to be of greater importance for the construction of the interpretant than its surrounding events. In this light, the contrastive structure of the libretto matters, this structure showing a great variety with regard to the distinction text-time, the amount of time the description of an event takes in the text, and story-time, the amount of time that an event really takes. If the former exceeds the latter it is likely to attract the reader's attention, and consequently this event will be of importance for the construction of the interpretant. If the amount of time that an event takes in terms of story-time exceeds the amount of time that is spent on a description of it in the text, this event is likely to play a far more minor role in the interpretant.

The last dimension of time is that of frequency. Rimmon-Kenan describes this as the 'relation between the number of times an event appears in the story and the number of times it is narrated (or mentioned) in the text'

(Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:56). Three different forms of repetitive narrative can be discerned: singulative narrative, in which what happened once is narrated once; repetitive narrative, in which what happened once is told *n* times; and iterative narrative, in which what happened *n* times is told once. What matters in case of frequency is the succession of unique and repeated events as perceived by the reader. If a particular event is repeated within a chain of unique events, either by being recalled or in live-action, this single event is likely to contribute significantly to the construction of the interpretant. The opposite is also true: a new event introduced within the context of a succession of repeated events will play a more important role in the reader's process of signification. It attracts the reader's attention for it departs from his expectations.

Events: space

Besides time, the second important dimension of action is space: action is the succession of events in time and space. Space has two dimensions: place and spatiality, the latter defined as the topological position of the characters and the events (Bal, 1990). The concept of place bears upon the physical, measurable form of the spatial dimensions. The temple in *Die Zauberflöte*, the Kremlin in *Boris Godunov* and the bottom of the Rhine in *Das Rheingold* are examples of 'place'. Spatiality is the result of perception, and as such it depends on sight, hearing and feeling. Spatiality can be suggested by appealing to one or more of these senses. As easily as spatiality can be designed in the theater, the more difficult it is to produce the spatial effects in the libretto. When reading the libretto, the reader can only rely on the sense of sight, that is, on what can be read in the libretto. Creating spatiality is now an activity which involves the reader's imagination, and as such it can become a part of the interpretant. Important clues in the text in this matter are the stage directions as given by the librettist. These directions usually confine themselves to descriptions of the scenery and the spatial position of the characters on stage:

Platz vor einer Waldschenke, songenanntem Schenkgiebel. Max (sitzt allein im Vordergrund rechts an einem Tisch, vor sich den Krug, im Hintergrund eine Vogelstange, von Volksgetümmel umgeben.)

This is an example from the stage directions for the first scene of the first act from *Der Freischütz*. The libretto is written by F. Kind; it is based on a novella from Apel's and Laun's *Gespensterbuch*. Carl Maria von Weber composed the music. When reading these stage directions, the reader can create an image of

the scene in his mind. This image will not be just a reproduction of what the librettist wrote down, but readers are inclined to create a complete image by filling in details which are not mentioned in the stage directions. To return to the example of Der Freischütz: not only will the reader create an image according to the spatial directions as given by the librettist, he will also fill in all kinds of detail in this scene. Because the reader knows or infers that this first act is situated in the countryside, he creates images of dimensions like the style of the buildings, the clothing of the peasants, and the nature of the surroundings. So, the reader of the opera text becomes his own director and creates his own spatial image of the opera's dramatic world.

This concludes the description of the libretto as a sign. We have seen that the libretto primarily is a form of epic drama. It is constituted by what can be called the main elements of the libretto: characters and events. These elements guide the reader in his semiosis. Let us now deal with the other sign that together with the libretto is part of the syncretic sign system that opera is: its music.

The music as a sign

Although music can be read as well as the libretto, it is primarily meant to be listened to. Even when read, the aural character of music emerges: although written musical signs come to us through our eyes, they are treated as a specific code that needs to be deciphered, and in the case of music this cognitive act of deciphering is a semiosis in which the visually perceived signs are transferred into an internal acoustic representation; into a mental reconstruction of the acoustic world. What is at issue here is the transition of a visual semiosis into an aural semiosis. So, even when we read music, we are actually listening to it. But what is it that we hear when listening to music? Essentially, we hear a succession of different tones which we relate to each other: we hear high tones, low tones, soft tones, loud tones, short tones and long tones, all with a particular distinctive 'sound'. These qualities of the tones we hear are related to the basic elements of music: pitch, duration, loudness, and timbre; the categories that constitute the musical sign.

Pitch refers to the height of a tone. Although it can be described in terms of frequency, which is expressed in Herz (Hz), this is not the way in which it is perceived. When music is listened to, the height of tones is not perceived in terms of absolute frequencies, but in relative terms of high and low. These values are perceived as musical values at the moment when the realization of one term immediately actualizes it opposite (Speelman,

1995:265). In other words: we can only say that a certain tone is high or low by relating this tone's height to that of another one. The same is true for duration and loudness. *Duration*, the time which passes between the attack of a tone and its release, can be measured in seconds, whereas loudness, a tone's intensity, can be expressed in Decibels (Db). However, duration is perceived in terms of short and long, *loudness* in terms of soft and loud. These oppositions can only be applied to a relation of tones, for it is impossible to say, for example, that a certain tone is long or short without relating the duration of this tone to the duration of another tone. The fourth musical category in terms of which the musical representamen can be described is *timbre*, 'that attribute of auditory sensation in terms of which a listener can judge that two steady-state complex tones having the same loudness and pitch are dissimilar' (Rasch & Plomp, 1982). Timbre is the quality of the voice or instrument making a sound (Coker, 1972), which can be expressed in waveform. With the Fourier analysis, the wave form of a tone can be decomposed into its harmonics, the simple tones that constitute a complex tone (Rasch & Plomp, 1982). Timbre is a multidimensional characteristic of sound. Unlike pitch, duration and loudness, timbre cannot be placed on a single scale with contrasting ends. In the score, timbre is indicated with linguistic signs that indicate the instruments which should be used (violin, oboe, timpani), as well as the special effects which should be used (for example *con sordino, pizzicato, una corda*) and indicators of characterization (for example *appassionata, giocoso*— indeed, the same piece played with different indicators of character results in a different sound of the orchestra). Instruments, effects and characterization are the values which are invested in the element of timbre.

The musical sign hardly ever actualizes just one variable of the elementary units. Music is primarily melody and motion, concepts which are determined by the category of pitch and duration. Pitch determines the melodic dimension of music, melody being defined as a sequence of the actualization of different values of the element of pitch, whereas duration determines the dimension of motion, motion being defined as a sequence of the actualization of different values of the element of duration. So, both categories, pitch and duration, form the nucleus of music. These elements can be further modified by the elements of loudness and timbre. The sequential dimension of the two most important musical elements implies that we cannot use the single tone for analytical purposes, for it lacks the two essential characteristics of music, that is, melody and motion. In fact, it is very unlikely for music to be perceived in terms of single tones; single tones are grouped into more significant elements which we call 'melody', 'motive', or 'theme'. Consequently, the single tone is not considered to be the smallest element of music which can be used to describe the musical categories in an acoustic semiotics of music.

The interval, the relation between two successive tones, is the second smallest element. With regard to the interval, it is possible to make statements about the pitch of the two tones (tone *x* is high compared to tone *y*, tone *y* is low compared to tone *x*), the duration of the separate tones (*x* is short compared to *y*, *y* is long compared to *x*), the loudness of the different tones (*x* is loud compared to *y*, *y* is soft compared to *x*) and the timbre of the different tones (*x* is played *pizzicato*, *y* is played *con arco*). In other words: the interval does not lack the essential characteristics of performed music (melody and motion). This seems to validate the use of the interval as the smallest element which can be used for a description of the musical signification process. In music theory, the term interval is reserved to describe the pitch relation between two tones. In this book, however, the term will be used to describe the pitch relation as well as the duration relation, the loudness relation and the timbre relation between two notes.

It is more appropriate to use the interval as the smallest element for a description of musical signification than to use the single tone for this purpose. However, music is not perceived as a sequence of pitch-intervals, duration-intervals, loudness-intervals and timbre-intervals. Although listening to music may begin with the perception of the tones in terms of these elements, during the listening process these dimensions of the tones we hear are combined into larger meaningful elements, as a result of which particular combinations of tones are given the status of motive or theme; they in turn create even larger structures like exposition, development and reprise. Therefore, the definition of 'interval' has to be adjusted. Here, the interval is defined as the interspace between two musical elements, ranging from notes via motives and themes through movements and separate compositions. Now it is possible to speak of differences which may occur between two musical elements in pitch (the pitch-interval), duration (the duration-interval), loudness (the loudness-interval) and timbre (the timbre-interval). The larger musical structures which emerge as a consequence of grouping the individual notes into larger significant elements, together form what can be considered as the narrative dimension of the musical discourse. The material it contains is subject to development: a musical element which rises, falls or is suddenly interrupted can be considered as an actor, an agent that performs actions.

Actions, according to Teun van Dijk, are doings brought about intentionally (Van Dijk, 1980:173). By stressing the intentional dimension, one can only speak of actions when performed by living creatures and human beings in particular: intentionality implies the involvement of mental activities, which only human beings and animals are considered to possess the ability to perform. This restriction would make it virtually impossible to speak of action in case of the musical discourse. It can be said of musical elements that

they perform particular actions, but it is unlikely that these actions are the result of the musical elements' mental activities. Music does not have a mind of its own; consequently, it is not useful to speak about musical actors and the actions they perform. Or does it? Could it be that there are certain musical dimensions which indicate the existence of something which might be called a 'musical mind' that performs actions intentionally and purposefully? Can music be described in terms of actors? Consider the following structure (figure 3.3):

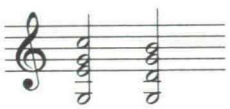

Figure 3.3

This sequence of chords is part of a cadence. It is a typical harmonic structure, which according to the rules of the theory of harmony should resolve into the tonic like this (figure 3.4):

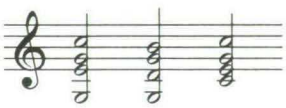

Figure 3.4

Now the cadence is complete. Of the tonic resolution it can be said that it is the cadence's intention. It also has a purpose, a threefold purpose to be precise: 1) it indicates the end of a part of the composition; 2) it establishes the key of this finished part; 3) it marks the beginning of a new part. Intention and purpose of an action can be either successful or unsuccessful. Not only does this apply to the libretto, it also has a bearing on intention and purpose in musical actions as performed by their actors. As an example, let us consider the orchestral introduction to Handel's coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* (see also Van Baest, 1997 and Van Baest, 2000). This introduction contains two cadence-like formulas. The first of these cadences succeeds in its intention to resolve into the tonic of A major, but fails in its purpose to mark the beginning of something new. After one intermissionary bar, things proceed as they began (figure 3.5):

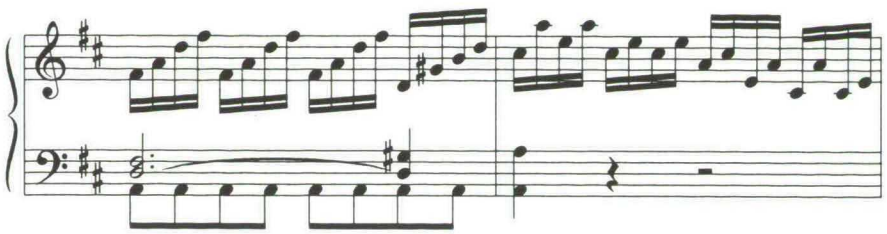

Figure 3.5

At yet another place, the cadence fails both in its intention and in its purpose (figure 3.6):

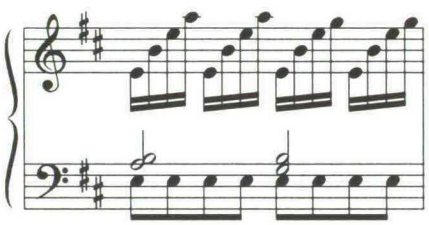

Figure 3.6

Finally, the third attempt to form a real cadence, that is, one which is successful regarding both intention and purpose, succeeds (figure 3.7):

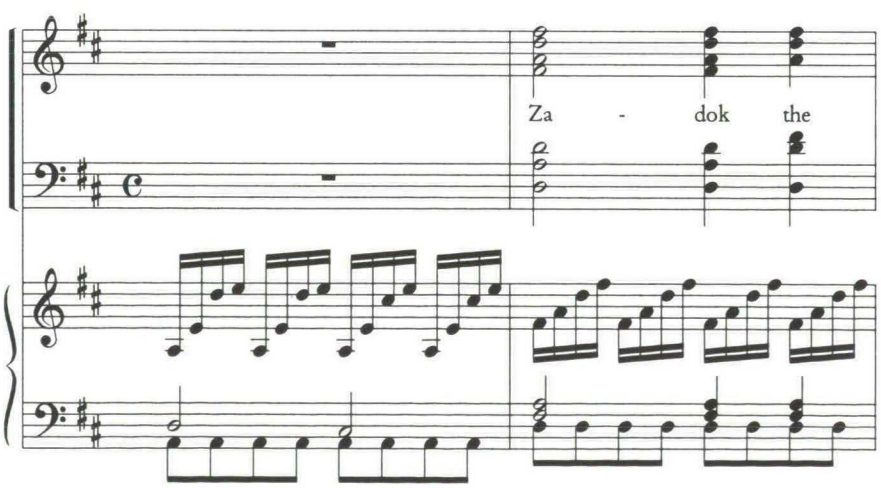

Figure 3.7

The way in which the different cadences in this orchestral introduction behave calls for an explanation, for whenever something occurs that does not match our habits and beliefs an explanation is sought which should account for this phenomenon. There appears to be no single interpretant; instead, several interpretants are possible, and they are positioned on a scale which reaches from purely musical to purely extra-musical interpretants. An explanation which is purely musical, and which could be the interpretant as formulated by a musicologist, is that the procedure as followed is necessary to return to the intial key of the composition, D major. Less purely musical could be the explanation that such a delay in the successful realization of both intention and purpose creates tension which in its turn might be necessary to keep the listener's attention. Finally, by postponing the definitive resolution, the phenomenon attracts attention in such a way that a listener is inclined to 'listen between the notes' and to assign meaning to this event. Assigning meaning to musical signs comes down to following and describing the trajectory of the different significant musical events, that is, a description of the musical discourse in the format of a narrative structure (such and such was the musical event's initial state, and through this and that developments it has been altered so and so). In this description, the orchestral introduction of Handel's anthem *Zadok the Priest* has become an entity which intentionally performs particular actions with a specific purpose in mind. It has become an actor, a 'doer' which acts within the context of a narrative macro-structure.

We have dealt with the nature of opera as a sign. This syncretism is constituted by the conjoining of two other signs: libretto and music, neither of which is predominant. With regard to the semiotic procedures that are involved in semiosis, these constituting signs do not differ from each other. In both cases signification follows the path of abduction— deduction— induction. The equality of both signs is reflected in their corresponding semiotic structure. Both have a form, the syntactic dimension, which is determined by a dynamical object in reality, this is the semantic dimension. The semantic dimension of the sign determines the nature of the interpretant; this is the pragmatic dimension of the sign. Differences between libretto and music relate to their form: a libretto is constituted of different formal elements than music. A second difference is that the libretto involves a semiosis that is rooted in the visual, whereas music involves a semiosis that is rooted in the aural.

Having dealt with the structure of the sign and its role in the process of signification we now have to look at the role of the subject in semiosis.

The role of the subject

In the previous section, opera was considered as a narrative art form, an art form that is concerned with agents and their actions. Because from a semiotic point of view opera is a syncretic sign system, which is constituted of the libretto and the music, it was concluded that the narrative dimension of opera is the synergetic result of the narrative dimension of its two fundaments. Recognizing such a dimension in opera is an act of semiosis, which not only requires a sign, but which involves a subject as well. This section presents a semiotic view of the activities of the subject. In the previous section it was argued that a musical signification process involves an aural semiosis, whereas signification in the libretto is concerned with a literary semiosis. Analogously to this distinction we have to distinguish between two different semiotics: a semiotics of listening and a semiotics of reading. We will begin with the latter.

Semiosis, or semiotic analysis, can be looked upon as a special instance of reading. The analogy with reading is that in a semiotic analysis the reader also enters into a relation with the text and assigns meaning to it. The difference is that a semiotic analysis follows an explicit method in which the different stages of the process of interaction are made explicit (cf. Van Wolde, 1989). A Peircean approach to reading as a semiotic phenomenon assumes that this process follows the path of Peirce's method of science, which subsequently employs the inferential procedures of abduction, deduction, and induction. Consequently, reading is a process that involves hypothesizing and inference; cognitive processes that are rooted in, and therefore begin with, observation. The difference with Peirce's scientific method is the starting point for drawing up an hypothesis as undertaken in the stage of abduction. In (Van Baest & Van Driel, 1995) it was argued that abduction involves three activities: an extensive description of the nature of the doubt causing phenomenon, determining the direction of the hypothesis, and the formulation of the hypothesis itself. How does this apply to the act of reading?

Reading as a semiotic activity usually does not begin with explicitly searching for doubt-causing, striking events which require semiosis to deal with. Instead, when a reader engages in the reading process he comes fully armed with expectations, experiences and knowledge bearing on the real world and on virtual worlds as depicted in literary texts; these schemata should guide him safely through the world as presented by the sign. This does not alter the idea that reading a text begins from a tabula rasa-like position: although we have expectations regarding different dimensions of the text, because we have not previously experienced this text it is necessary to follow its trajectory if the purpose is to create an interpretant. When we start reading we do not know what is going to happen or what to expect, but thanks to our

schemata we will soon be able to hypothesize about what direction the text will take. If we want to, it is possible to test each hypothesis that the reading process yields through deduction and induction. For this purpose we can rely on both our schemata and the information as it is presented by the text itself; with regard to the latter, it is even possible to go back in the story or to go beyond the point that we have reached at a particular moment. As the story proceeds the necessity of hypothesizing gradually fades away because of a dramatic reduction of the number of possible directions into which the story could develop. In the beginning, however, it can develop in whatever direction, which makes the reader rely on his inferential abilities. These abilities are also called upon when the reader is confronted with 'flaws'— the character of a character can suddenly change without any apparent reasons; illogical jumps in the temporal or spatial continuity can occur; the story can be interrupted by interjections the language of which deviates significantly from its general language. Such 'flaws' are striking events that call for an explanation that is formed by following the trajectory of abduction-deduction-induction. This act of hypothesizing is an integral part of constructing an interpretant.

Listening to music as a semiotic activity behaves more or less in the same way as reading. Here too it is initially unknown what direction the music will take, and her too the number of possible directions in which the music could move decreases as the composition moves on. Like a literary text, a musical composition also activates particular schemata which will guide the listener during his listening process. There is a difference, however, between listening to music and reading a literary text. Unlike a literary text, a musical composition does not give the subject much opportunity to hypothesize and to test his hypotheses. Abduction, deduction and induction require the possibility to temporarily slow down or even to completely stop the development of the sign. In the case of a literary text this is very well possible; it has already been mentioned that the reader can go backwards and forwards in the story as he pleases. When listening to music it is far more difficult to follow these strategies. Music is motion. It is a continuous motion that begins at the beginning and that stops at the end. Motion can only be experienced by following it; therefore, it is well-nigh impossible to interrupt this motion without disturbing the listening process— try stopping in the middle of a Mahler symphony and continuing after some period; it will not work because you interrupted the logical and natural motion of the symphony. The consequence is that if one aims at giving an in-depth analysis of a musical composition, the written score should be used instead of the acoustical representation of this score. Scores can perfectly well be read; a semiotic analysis of a score involves the same semiotical strategies as reading a libretto, that is, abduction, deduction and induction.

In the previous discussion of the activities of the subject, from now on we will speak of the reader, it was said that signification involves the effectuation of schemata. What are schemata, and how do they work?

Schemata are 'organized clusters of knowledge' (Bordwell, 1985:31); they guide our perception. On the basis of these different schemata we can make assumptions, erect expectations and confirm or disconfirm hypotheses. Perception can proceed in two different ways: either bottom up, an inferential procedure in which the perceptual input determines what schemata should be actualized, or top down, in which the organization of the perceptual input is determined by particular schemata (cf. Bobrow & Norman, 1975). How this works, may be illustrated by using musical sound as an example. Bottom-up perception of music appears for example when we hear a particular musical composition which has such a formal structure that we automatically actualize schemes like 'gregorian chant', 'church music', 'medieval', and 'roman catholic'. In other words: bottom-up processes are concerned with finding cognitive structures in which to embed the input. Top-down perception works the other way round: it is driven by schemata-based motives and goals, and perceptual input must fit to our expectations. Listening to music departs from particular schemata. Each musical stimulus we encounter is then evaluated in the light of these schemata. If the stimulus does not match information as stored in one of those schemata, two things can happen: the stimulus is ignored and not added to the schemata, or an attempt is made to find an explanation for the surprising event, the latter being the initation of another semiosis.

Schemata theory starts from the position that all sensory input data automatically invoke processing. Each input event triggers particular schemata (ibidem). This implies that signification begins with bottom-up perception of input data which then trigger the appropriate schemata. The remainder of semiosis is then characterized by the interaction between bottom-up and top-down perception, that is, once the appropriate schemata are found, the discourse is continuously being tested against these schemata (top down), whereas at the same time the discourse is continuously being scanned for signs which might require the application of different schemata. In this light, the disctinction between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' processing of information can also be applied to the Peircean notion of the striking event which initiates semiosis. Top-down striking events are events that startle us because the data seem not compliant with the already activated schemata, whereas bottom-up striking events are events which derive their striking nature from the fact that perceptual input is involved for which we have not yet triggered an appropriate schema, or for which we cannot find an appropriate place in one of our existing schemata. At the moment that we perceive a discrepancy between the

sign and our knowledge as stored in our schemata, semiosis is initiated; 'Thus it is that the things that we most expect to see or experience will leave the least impact on us: it is the discrepancies that we will note' (ibidem:144). The discrepant events are processed until we know how to account for them, that is, until we have formulated a satisfying hypothesis or possible explanation.

Because we are continuously confronted with all kinds of different stimuli, our minds must be equipped with a huge set of different schemata that can deal with all these stimuli. This set of schemata forms a gigantic database with information on the widest possible range of fields. So, the question is: what kind of schemata could be discerned? In general, three types of schemata can be discerned: prototype schemata, template schemata, and procedural schemata. The first two are employed by the latter. These procedural schemata involve 'protocols which dynamically acquire and organize information' (Bordwell, 1985:36). In the previous chapter, we dealt with such protocols from a Peircean point of view in our discussion of logical argumentation (conscious semiosis), acritical inference (pre-conscious semiosis), and associational suggestions of belief (unconscious semiosis). 'Prototype schemata involve identifying individual members of a class according to some posited norm' (ibidem:34). This type of schemata is required to identify individual characters and events. For example, when reading and understanding *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* we use prototype schemata to deal with prototypes like 'lovers', 'abduction', 'harem', and 'Turkey'. These prototype schemata function within larger structures or template schemata. Research into story comprehension shows that we tend to apply such a template or master schema in our understanding of narrative texts. For this purpose our minds are equipped with templates that involve a kind of narrative super-structure or macro-structure with which we approach a text. Most researchers on story comprehension agree on the format of this narrative macro-structure, which is supposed to consist of the following elements (see Branigan, 1998:14):

1. introduction of setting and characters;
2. explanation of a state of affairs;
3. initiating event;
4. emotional response or statement of a goal by the protagonist;
5. complicating actions;
6. outcome;
7. reactions to the outcome

This macro-structure tells us that a story has a beginning, a middle and an end; that the beginning consists of the introduction of the characters and their initial state (1-2); that the middle part of the story deals with different events

that bring about changes in the intial state as presented in the beginning (3-5); and that the end reports these changes and the reactions of the characters to them (6-7). Furthermore, the hierarchical order of the different elements in this macro-structure implies both causality and chronological order (cf. Kintsch, 1977:38).

When reading an opera, the reader employs a narrative macro-structure like the one presented above to deal with the syncretism as well as with its constituent parts. With regard to the libretto this seems obvious, for the libretto is a narrative art form which focuses on a description of events and their characters. But how about the music? Can this sign also be dealt with as a narrative form to which a narrative macro-structure can be applied? It was said that the musical discourse does have a narrative dimension in which a musical theme that rises or falls can be considered as an actor which performs a particular event. A musical compositions is a succession of such events. When listening to music or when reading a score we try to identify these musical events as a basis for constructing a musical interpretant. The musical events can only be identified by following their trajectory. This trajectory can be described in terms of the super-structure that all such trajectories have in common: it has a beginning (the initial state of affairs), a middle section in which events occur that change things, and it has an end, that is, the eventual state of affairs. What we are dealing with here is a narrative macro-structure. Regarding the operatic sign, it is this macro-structure that is employed as a template schema in semiosis of the libretto as well as the music; this schema is supplied with information as provided by the sign. Following this procedure, the reader is fulfilling his task, that is, the creation of an interpretant.

A discussion of the role of the reader in a semiotic analysis would not be complete without a short remark on the abilities and limitations of the reader. In chapter 2, semiosis was defined as the interaction between a sign and the sign-user. The sign that is the object of interpretation is dealt with by the sign-user departing from his own intellectual competence, that is, his habits and beliefs, his experience, expectations and knowledge, his physical abilities and the situation in which semiosis takes place. All these dimensions of the sign-user can facilitate semiosis but they can frustrate it as well. Not having access to primary or secondary literature, and disfunctional senses of hearing and sight are just a few small yet far-reaching examples of situational characteristics that can have a negative influence on semiosis. The ideal *homo semioticus* does not exist; it is just an *idée-fixe* as the existence of *the* ideal final interpretant or *the* 'meaning' of a sign.

We have come to the conclusion of the first part of this book, which dealt with the theoretical foundations of a semiotic theory of signification in opera. Based on the premises as outlined here, the remaining chapters of this book further explore this terrain, focusing on a description of the process along which interpretants are formed in the case of opera. Both signs which together constitute opera as a syncrectic object will function in a semiotical analysis of an opera by means of one and the same method, so as to indicate the equality of both signs with regard to the processes that are involved in signification, their differences being reduced to the level of the representamen. Because only conscious semiosis and the formation of interpretants will be taken into consideration, Peirce's method of science shall be used as an analytical model. This analysis is presented in the second part of this book, whereas reflection on this semiosis and its implications for a semiotic theory of signification in opera will take place in the third part. But that will have to wait. For now, you are invited on a journey through the world of *Orfeo ed Euridice*, written and composed by Rainieri Calzabigi and Christoph Willibald von Gluck.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIBRETTO OF *ORFEO ED EURIDICE*

Introduction

The myth of Orpheus and Euridice has always proven to be appealing subject matter for librettists and opera composers. Throughout the history of the genre, many operas have been written with this mythical source as its background: Peri's *Euridice* (1600), Monteverdi's *Orfeo* (1607), Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* (1762), Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* (1858), Milhaud's *Les malheurs d'Orphée* (1924), Birtwistle's *The mask of Orpheus* (1984) and Glass' *Orphée* (1993) are but a few of them. Maybe the popularity of this myth has something to do with the fact that its main subject deals with the essence of opera: the myth of Orpheus and Euridice is a myth about the power of music, more specifically about the magical powers which singing can summon up. The singer, this is what the myth seems to tell us, is given the power to arrange or re-arrange the world in which he lives. This is exactly what is going on in opera. Singing is its nucleus, and not only does the singer control the theatrical world, he is also gifted with the power to enchant his audience and to lead them into a different world; hís world, the world in which music reigns. But the myth of Orpheus and Euridice is not only about music and singing, it is also a myth about love: Orpheus' love for his wife is the only inspiration for his actions, and that includes his singing as well; this love is what keeps him going. Out of love he decides to follow Euridice across the Styx in an attempt to rescue her from death; out of love he does the fatal thing: looking back to Euridice on their way to the world of the living:

They well-nigh now had pass'd the bounds of night,
And just approach'd the margin of the light,
When he, mistrusting lest her steps might stray,
And gladsome of the glympse of dawning day,
His longing eyes, impatient, backward cast
To catch a lover's look, but look'd his last;
For, instant dying, she again descends,
While he to empty air his arms extends.

Again she dy'd, nor yet her lord reprov'd;
What could she say, but that too well he lov'd?[1]

In the second part of this book the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*, written by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Rainieri Calzabigi (1762) will be analyzed according to the premises as outlined in chapter 3. First, the libretto will be read and analyzed; this analysis will be followed by an analysis of the music in chapter 5, and in the last chapter of this part the conjoining of both libretto and music will be taken into consideration.

Reading a libretto involves the construction of an interpretant, a rendering of the dramatic world on the basis of the information as presented by the libretto. It is the outcome of a series of cognitive processes which starts with careful observation of the discourse, the sign: what characters are involved, what kind of events do they play a role in both actively and passively, what can be said about the temporal-spatial dimension of the action and its events? This information is then processed through various intermediate steps that together function as a funnel that directs semiosis towards a particular outcome, and eventually the interpretant is formed. However, this is not as easy a task as it might seem. During the reading process the reader is continually being confronted with 'flaws'—the traits of a character can suddenly change without any apparent reason; illogical jumps in the temporal or spatial continuity of the story can occur; it can be interrupted by interjections, the language of which deviates significantly from its general language. Such 'flaws' which the reader is confronted with are striking events that call for an explanation, an explanation that is formed by following the trajectory of Peirce's method of science with its three inferential procedures of abduction, deduction and induction. This act of hypothesizing is an integral part of constructing an interpretant. How close the two are tied together will be shown in an analysis of the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice*. We will begin with specifically observing the sign in the light of the characters and the events involved in it, to gather as much information as possible for the construction of an interpretant. Problems that we might encouter while reading the libretto will be subjected to semiosis, that is, by means of Peirce's method of science we will try to formulate a satisfactory hypothesis that is to account for the striking event, as result of which it should be possible to integrate them into the interpretant.

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[1] From Book X of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 'translated into English verse under the direction of Sir Samuel Garth by John Dryden, Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, William Congrave and other eminent hands'; the Internet Classics Archive, http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html.

Abduction

Observation of the sign: characters

Four characters are involved in Calzabigi's libretto: Orpheus, Euridice, Amor and the choir. Usually the reader of the libretto is being informed to a certain extent about the physical appearance of the main characters that are involved in the action as well as on their main character traits. Regarding the characters' physical appearance, we are then provided with information on, for example, their clothing, whether they have a particular facial expression, and with other information about their appearance which might be helpful for semiosis. When this information is of vital importance, it will be presented soon after the characters' introduction; additional information is added to this initial information in due course. The same holds for crucial information regarding the characters' traits. On the basis of this information the reader can create an image of the characters involved in the action. The libretto to *Orfeo ed Euridice* only provides us with this type of information with regard to Orpheus and Euridice. The fact that no information is given about the physical appearance and character traits of Amor and the choir does not imply that Amor and the choir do not have to be considered as protagonists. Especially Amor plays a significant role in the libretto. We will deal with Amor and the choir later; for the moment we have to concentrate on Orpheus and Euridice.

On many places in the libretto, Euridice is referred to in terms of beauty, for example by Orpheus, when looking for her in the Elysian fields:

I suoi soavi accenti,	Her amiable voice,
Gli amoroso suoi sguardi, il suo bel riso,	Her loving look, her tender laugh
Sono il mio solo, il mio diletto Eliso!	Are my only, my precious Elysium!

Euridice is aware of her beauty. When Orpheus leads her back through the labyrinth to the world of the living and does not take a look at her, she asks him:

Dimmi, son bella ancora,	Tell me, am I still as beautiful
Qual era un dì?	As before?
Vedi, che forse è spento il roseo del mio volto?	Look, did the rose tint of my face not fade?
Odi, che forso s'oscurò	Listen, has the glow of my eyes
Quel che amasti	Which you loved
E soave chiamasti,	And which you called tender
Splendor de' sguardi miei?	Perhaps extinguished?

Other significant information on Euridice's state bears upon her physical state of dead versus not-dead which functions as the backbone of the action. When the action begins, Euridice is dead, and we are witnesses of her funeral rite. Besides the rituals as performed by the choir, the fact that Euridice is dead can be deduced from the beginning of the opera, when the choir sings a lament on the death of Euridice. This moaning is heightened by Orpheus, who passionately cries out for her:

CORO
Ah, se intorno a quest'urna funesta,
Euridice, ombra bella, t'aggiri...
ORFEO
Euridice!
CORO
Odi i pianti, i lamenti, i sospiri
Che dolenti si spargon per te.
ORFEO
Euridice!
CORO
Ed ascolta il tuo sposo infelice
Che piangendo ti chiama...
ORFEO
Euridice!
CORO
E si lagna;
Come quando la dolce compagna
Tortorella amorosa perdé!

CHOIR
Ah, if you are wandering around this ill-fated urn, Euridice, precious shadow...
ORPHEUS
Euridice!
CHOIR
Hear the sobbing, the complaining, the sighing with which we mourn for you.
ORPHEUS
Euridice!
CHOIR
And listen to your unfortunate spouse,
Who wheepingly calls for you...
ORPHEUS
Euridice!
CHOIR
And who pities himself;
Like the loving turtledove
Who lost his tender companion!

In the third scene Euridice is given back life, which can be deduced from the facts that Orpheus leads her by her hand, that Orpheus and she can talk to each other, and, more importantly, that Orpheus looks at her— as a result of which Euridice dies for the second time. Finally, Amor gives Euridice life back for the second time in the fourth scene.

Euridice's physical state of dead versus not-dead/being alive, appears to determine the emotional state of the other characters, and her beauty is the main inspiration for their actions. With regard to Orpheus, the emotional state he finds himself in does not behave autonomously. Instead, he is fully controlled by Euridice's physical state which is paralleled by his emotional state. In the first scene, when Euridice is already dead, Orpheus is in a state of sorrow. When Euridice is given back life, in the third scene, this sorrow turns into happiness, whereas her second death makes his grief even more sorrowful than the first time she died, and her second resurrection doubles his happiness. Orpheus' state emerges from his loyal love for Euridice, for whom he

expresses everlasting love. It is this love which inspires all his actions. The choir of Heroes and Heroines express this when Euridice is given back to him:

Torna, o bella, al tuo consorte,	Return, o beautiful, to your consort,
Che non vuol che più diviso	For the merciful heaven does not want
Sia da te, pietoso il ciel.	him to be separated from you any
Non lagnarti di tua sorte,	longer. Do not bemoan your fate,
Che può dirsi un altro Elisio	For such a loyal spouse may be called
Uno sposo sì fedel!	Another Elysium!

This is the only moment on which the choir does not address Orpheus directly but one of the other characters, that is, Euridice. She is almost ordered to go back to Orpheus, and at the same time the choir seems to speak here in defense of Orpheus.

Besides being a loving and caring husband who is loyal to his wife, Orpheus is also depicted as a brave and a determined man. Notwithstanding the warnings that Amor gives him, Orpheus boldly decides to go after Euridice and to retrieve her from the Elysian fields:

AMOR	AMOR
Avrai valor che bastì	Do you have enough courage
A questa prova estrema?	For this extreme trial?
ORFEO	ORPHEUS
Mi prometti Euridice,	You promise me Euridice,
E vuoi ch'io tema?	And think that I will recoil?

Calzabigi restored the choir as an acting and commenting subject, a function it originally had in Greek tragedy, where it both engaged in dialog with the characters and sung and danced choral songs. This was one of the major reforms of his libretto. Accordingly, the choir in *Orfeo ed Euridice* plays different roles. In the first scene it assumes the role of shepherds and nymphs, in the second scene the choir acts as furies, shades and monsters, in the third scene it acts as Elysian heroes and heroines, and in the fifth and final scene the choir plays the role of shepherds and shepherdesses. The fourth scene is without choir. Each of the scenes in which the choir is involved also contains ballets that are to be performed by members of the choir. As an agent, the choir is coupled with Orpheus; that is, it only acts in direct encounters with the libretto's protagonist. Never does it act without Orpheus being involved or addressed, the only exception to this rule being the choir of heroes and heroines which speak in favor of Orpheus when he meets Euridice in the Elysian fields. In the first scene the choir mourns with Orpheus and it performs the funeral rites, in the second scene the choir acts as antagonist by trying to pre-

vent Orpheus from entering the Underworld, in the third scene it welcomes Orpheus to the Elysian fields, whereas in the fifth scene the choir falls in with Orpheus and Euridice panegyrizing Amor. Amor, by the way, is the only character that is not affected by Euridice's state. Nevertheless his actions are related to her state in the sense that it is not Euridice who affects Amor, but the opposite is true: Amor's actions affect Euridice. Because it was said that Euridice's state affects both Orpheus and the choir, it must be concluded that eventually it is Amor who determines the emotional state and the actions of the characters.

Observation of the sign: events

Events occur within a specific temporal-spatial dimension; therefore, a description of the events as reported in the libretto has to distinguish between both time and place. First, we will consider the temporal aspect of the libretto, subsequently attention will be focused at the aspect of place.

Time

As shown in chapter 3, time, or better: the temporal aspect of narrative discourse consists of three subelements: the temporal order of the events, the duration of these events, and finally the frequency with which these events occur. In this section these three dimensions of the temporal aspect of the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice* will be dealt with.

the temporal order of the events

First, a remark should be made about the temporal setting of the events as reported by the libretto. We are not told when exactly these events occur, nor is the reader provided with information about a possible evolution of the action through different moments in time (for example, evening-night-morning). Nowhere in the libretto are references made to either aspect of the action's temporal setting, which seems to imply the following: 1) the story of Orpheus and Euridice is for all times instead of being confined to a particular temporal place somewhere in history, which in turn leads to the conclusion that if this story indeed is for all times, it must also take place here and now, right at this moment; 2) the lack of indications of a temporal evolution of the action suggests that we are dealing here with an extended description of what is actually a very short moment within the scheme of things— an extreme and

sublimated case of deceleration, 'devoting a long segment of the text to a short period of the story' (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:53). What these findings may imply for signification will be dealt with later in this chapter. First we have to further explore the temporal-spatial dimension of the events that together form the a-historical magnified moment the story of Orfeo ed Euridice is.

When the first scene begins, and with it the libretto, Euridice has already died. We have seen that one part of the choir is carrying out the necessary funeral rites, whereas the other part of the choir sings a lament on her death. In this song the choir mourns for Euridice and they directly address her by dedicating their mourning to her. Orpheus joins or interrupts this lament by crying Euridice's name out aloud. Then Orpheus demands the choir to leave, for their mourning intensifies that of his own. Now Orpheus is completely alone. He continues the lament which the choir initiated, although with a difference: Orpheus does not so much seem to mourn the death of Euridice as such, as did the choir, but most of all he seems to mourn his loss. It is almost as if Orpheus makes himself, instead of Euridice, into the object of mourning:

L'idol del mio cor	The goddess of my heart
Non mi risponde [...]	Does not answer me [...]
Ombra cara, ove sei?	Beloved shadow, where are you?
Piange il tuo sposo,	Your spouse is weeping,
Ti domanda agli dei,	Begs the gods, the mortals
A' mortali ti chiede	For your return
E sparse a' venti	And in the wind he spoils
Son le lagrime sue,	His tears,
I suoi lamenti! [...]	His laments! [...]
In ogni tronco	In each tree
Scrisse il misero Orfeo,	The miserable Orpheus scribed:
Orfeo, infelice!	Infelicious Orpheus!
Euridice, idol mio!	Euridice, my goddess!
Cara Euridice!	Beloved Euridice!

Orpheus ends his lament with an appeal to the gods to return Euridice to him. He is even prepared to go after her in the Underworld. At this point Amor intervenes. As if Orpheus' appeal to the gods was not without effect, Amor comes to assist Orpheus by promising him the return of Euridice. To get her back, Orpheus himself must go after her in the Underworld, and if he manages to get there, that is, if he manages to mollify the Furies and the monsters, Euridice will be his again. Euridice's return however is not unconditional: Orpheus is neither allowed to take a look at her until they have left the caves of the Styx, nor is he to inform her of this prohibition. If Orpheus ignores this he will lose Euridice again and this time for ever, whereas he him-

self will be doomed to lead a miserable life due to a passionate longing for her. Despite these conditions, Orpheus is determined to get Euridice back. Apparently his desire to get Euridice back overshadows the risks involved; Orpheus is willing to take the test. One moment he contemplates the dilemma he is set for: what will Euridice think of it when he does not take a look at her and hold her in his arms? Although he tries to anticipate her reaction, his longing and his loss are stronger; they inspire him to try to get her back whatever it might cost. Orpheus motivates his choice with these words:

Ho risoluto. Il grande,	I am determined. The greatest,
L'insoffribil de' mali è l'esser privo	Unbearable evil is to be robbed
Dell' unico dell' alma amato oggetto;	From the only beloved; Assist me, o
Assistetemi, o Dei! La legge accetto.	gods! I accept your commandment.

Orpheus intends to undertake the dangerous journey to the Underworld with the purpose to be reunited with his 'only beloved'. Whether Orpheus succeeds with regard to both aspects of his acting is described in the second scene when he has to undergo his tests. Here, Orpheus finds himself at the entrance of the Underworld which he is about to enter when the Furies and the ghosts (a role of the choir) stop him. They intend to scare Orpheus off in order to prevent him from entering their realm. Judging from what the Furies and the ghosts sing after their ballet, access to the Underworld is only granted to the gods:

Chi mai dell'Erebo	Who is it that,
Fra le caligini,	Following Hercules
Sull'orme d'Ercole	And Pirithus,
E di Piritoo	Approaches through the
Conduce il piè?	Mists of the Erebus?
D'orror l'ingombrino	May the fierce Eumenides
Le fiere Eumenidi	Fill him with terror
E lo spaventino	And may the roaring of Cerberus
Gli urli di cerbero,	Make him shudder
Se un Dio non è!	If he is no god!

After this song, the Furies and the ghosts engage in a second ballet in which they dance around Orpheus to frighten him. Orpheus, however, is determined to go through. He tries to mollify the Furies to let him pass by playing the lyre and by singing about his love and the grief that is caused by the loss of his beloved. He tries to make the Furies feel the same way he does, that is, Orpheus assumes that the Furies and the ghosts are still capable of human emotions like love and the grief that is caused by the loss of the beloved. Orpheus anticipates these emotions; gradually the anger of the Furies and the

ghosts makes room for different feelings, as a result of which they determine to grant Orpheus access to the Underworld:

Ah quale incognito	Oh, what unknown
Affetto flebile,	Mild feeling
Dolce a sospendere	Is gradually dispelling
Vien l'implacabile	Our implacable
Nostro furor?	Anger?
Le porte stridano	Make the gates squeak
Su i neri cardini;	In their black hinges
E il passo lascino	And let there be
Sicuro e libero	Safe and free access
Al vincitor!	For the victor!

Although in mythology Orpheus is the singer and musician who enchants nature with his music and who even tries to cast his spell on the Underworld, in Calzabigi's libretto the change in the Furies' attitude seems to be more the result of Orpheus' account of his uncompromising love for Euridice than of his musical abilities. In fact, Calzabigi's version of the Orpheus myth is characterized by the absence of explicit references to Orpheus' magical musical powers. The only connection that is made in the libretto between Orpheus and music occurs in the stage directions at the beginning of the second scene: the Furies perform their ballet, and are interrupted by Orpheus playing the lyre.

Once Orpheus has been granted access to the Elysian Fields and enters, he is struck by the sheer beauty, of which he sings in his arioso 'Che puro ciel'. Soon, however, his joy is overtaken by a longing for Euridice. Orpheus cannot wait any longer and he decides to ask the 'anime avventurose' (the blessed spirits) where she is. The choir first welcomes Orpheus to the Elysian fields and underlines Amor's promise: Euridice will return, and she will live again with all her beauty. Orpheus excuses himself for his impatience. Here we see Orpheus using the same tactics he used before in mollifying the Furies, that is, making them feel his being eaten up by his love for Euridice:

Anime avventurose,
Ah, tollerate in pace le impazienze mie!
Se foste amanti,
Conoscerete a prova
Quel focoso desio,
Che mi tormenta,
Che per tutto è con me.
Nemmeno in questo
Placido albergo
Esser poss'io felice,
Se non trovo il mio ben.

Blessed spirits,
Oh, forgive me my impatience!
If you have ever been in love,
Then you know by experience
This burning desire
That tortures me,
That accompanies me anywhere.
Even in this
Peacuful domain
I cannot be happy,
If I do not find my love

The choir points him towards Euridice, who is returned to Orpheus. They conclude with speaking of Orpheus as a loyal spouse and a different Elysium ('un altro Eliso'), this song being accompanied by a ballet. Then Orpheus takes Euridice by her hand and swiftly he leads her away without taking a look at her. He urges her to follow him, and he expresses his loyalty to Euridice. Euridice has not got the faintest idea as to what is happening to her. She has lots of questions to ask Orpheus, but at this moment he cannot and will not answer them; the only thing he wants to do now is to leave the Underworld as soon as possible. In his attempts to make Euridice unconditionally follow him, he confirms that both he and she are alive, and that soon they will be able to observe their own world:

Fra poco il nostro cielo,
Il nostro sole, il mondo
Di bel nuovo vedrai!
[...]
Ombra tu più non sei,
Io, non son ombra.

Soon you will see again
Our sky, our sun,
Our world!
[...]
You are not a shadow anymore,
I am not a shadow.

It is not a dream, what happens is real. Euridice is filled with joy, and she looks forward to a new life in the arms of her beloved:

Io dunque in braccio
All' idol mio
Fra' più soavi lacci
D'Amore e d'Imeneo
Nuova vita vivrò!

So I will fall in the arms
Of my beloved,
And lead a new life
In the sweet bounds
Of Amor and Hymen!

Orpheus shows a similar kind of excitement, but quickly replaces it with his fear of losing Euridice again. He strongly urges her to proceed and to stop

lingering, but Euridice does not want to have anything to do with it; what she wants is a token of affection, she wants Orpheus to take her in his arms, to look at her beauty, or to give her whatever sign that expresses his true feelings for her. However, Orpheus does not dare to give her such a sign, afraid as he is of possibly violating Amor's commandment. Consequently, Euridice seriously doubts Orpheus' sincerity; she thinks that Orpheus no longer cherishes the same feelings for her as he did before she had passed away. Orpheus cannot do anything else than walk on and try to silence Euridice before her accusations of him no longer being loyal to her force him to violate Amor's commandments. At the same time he tries to encourage himself not to give way to his passionate feelings for Euridice. However, her anger keeps growing and growing; she even calls him a traitor. Desparately, Orpheus urges her to behave the way he wants her to, but reluctantly she refuses:

ORFEO	ORPHEUS
Vieni, appaga il tuo consorte!	Come, do as your consort wants!
EURIDICE	EURIDICE
No, più cara è a me la morte,	No, I prefer death
Che di vivere con te!	To living with you!

At this point, Orpheus and Euridice split up and lean on opposing trees. Euridice now expresses her disappointment:

Che fiero momento!	What horrible moment!
Che barbara sorte!	What evil fate!
Passar della morte	Having to exchange death
A tanto dolor!	With so much grief!
Avvezzo al contento	Being used to the joy
D'un placido oblio,	Of placid oblivion,
Fra queste tempeste	My heart collapses
Si perde il mio cor.	In these turbulences.

Now Orpheus finds himself in an impossible dilemma: either he obeys Amor's commandments and Euridice will—literally—die of a broken heart, or he gives way to his feelings for Euridice and satisfies her needs by violating these commandments, as a result of which she will die as well. Orpheus has to choose between life without love or love without life. Either way, Orpheus is about to lose Euridice for the second time. He does not know what to do, but after a desparate last call from Euridice he can no longer resist the pressure and turns around to look at her. Euridice dies for the second time. Inconsolable, Orpheus sees no other way out than to follow Euridice across the river Lethe by taking his own life:

Che farò senza Euridice?	What to do without Euridice?
Dove andrò senza il mio ben?	Where to go without my love?
Euridice!... Oh Dio! Rispondi!	Euridice!... Oh god! Answer me!
Io son pure il tuo fedel!	I will always be loyal to you!
Euridice!... Ah! non m'avanza	Euridice!... Ah! No more help,
Più soccorso, più speranza,	No more hope has been left for me,
Né dal mondo, né dal ciel!	Neither from earth, nor from heaven!
Ah finisca e per sempre	Ah, let my grief be over forever,
Con la vita il dolor! [...]	Together with my life! [...]
Non, questa volta senza lo sposo tuo	No, this time you will not cross Lethe's
Non varcherai l'onde lente di Lete.	Languid waves without your spouse.

As soon as Orpheus intends to take his own life, Amor intervenes and disarms him. Orpheus however does not recognize him until Amor introduces himself. To Orpheus' question as to what Amor wants from him, the god answers that Euridice is given back to him because he has given Amor the greatest possible evidence of his loyal love. Orpheus and Euridice embrace, and together with Amor they return to earth. Here, the choir of shepherds and shepherdesses celebrate Euridice's return, and they commence a joyous dance. Orpheus interrupts this ballet with a hymn to Amor and the empire of beauty. Euridice, Amor and the choir join him.

Within the sequence of events that together form the libretto's plot, frequent references are made to both past and future. With regard to the past, the only thing that is referred to is the period previous to Euridice's death in which Euridice was renowned for her beauty. The remembrance of this beauty is all that is left of her. In her turn, once reunited with Orpheus, Euridice refers to his past character traits of loyalty, of his steadness, of his love. In Euridice's reaction Orpheus sees his anticipations confirmed. He tries to console Euridice by making implicit references to Amor's commandment that has been revealed to him in the past. In this way, Orpheus also relives his misgivings. References to future events are made when Orpheus is visited by Amor. Both Amor's promise that Euridice shall live again and his commandment not to look at her are prospective moments that point forward to Orpheus' descent into the Underworld and the fatal outcome of this attempt to rescue Euridice. This prospective moment is intensified by Orpheus' recitative when Amor has left. In this recitative, Orpheus anticipates both Euridice's reaction and that of his own:

Sposa infelice!	Infelicious bride!
Che dirà mai? Che penserà?	What will she say? What will she think?
Preveggo	I forsee
Le smanie sue: comprendo	her impatience, feel
L'angustie mie. Nel figurarlo solo	My anxiety. Only the thought of it
Sento gelarmi il sangue,	Makes my blood coagulate,
Tremarmi il cor...	Makes my heart tremble...

When Euridice is dying of a broken heart, Orpheus forgets the commandment and what will occur when he does look at Euridice. Past and future do not matter anymore, what counts is the present, *this* moment, the moment at which Orpheus must give Euridice a token of his affection before she dies for the second time.

the duration of the events

Duration relates to the distinction between text-time, that is, the amount of time as spent on an event in the text, and story-time, a term that refers to the amount of time this event takes up in the reality of the story. This distinction between text-time and story-time can be used to describe the relative duration of events as told in the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice*. The sequence of events as told in the libretto can be summarized in five main events: Orpheus mourning for the loss of Euridice, Orpheus descending into the Underworld, the reunion of Orpheus and Euridice, Euridice's second death and resurrection, and finally the celebration of Amor. When dealt with in terms of duration, it is notable that although each of these events take up a considerable amount of text-time, two of them are striking events: Euridice's second death and resurrection is the most extensively described event of the story, whereas the event that follows it, the festive celebration of Amor, takes by far the shortest amount of text-time. Relating the relative amounts of text-time and story-time as devoted to these five events yields the following diagram (figure 4.1):

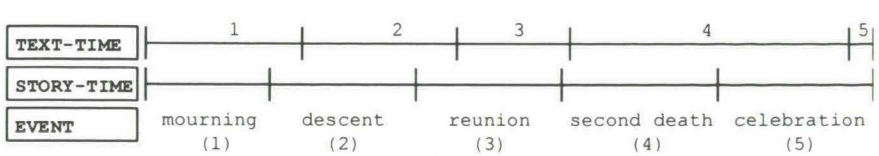

Figure 4.1

The libretto shows a strong emphasis on the last two scenes. As far as the aspect of duration is concerned these two scenes are incongruous with the other events as described in the libretto, the 'second death'-scene because of the great amount of text-time that is spent on it, the 'celebration'-scene because of its shortness.

the frequency of the events

The frequency of events relates to the number of times the different events in a story are reported in the discourse (see chapter 3). In the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice* four events happen twice: the death of Euridice; Orpheus mourning as a reaction to her death; the intervention of Amor who at first urges Orpheus to descend into the Underworld but who later prevents Orpheus from changing his temporary presence in the Underworld into an eternal stay in these realms by committing suicide (an irreversible descent this would be); and the reunion of Orpheus and Euridice. These are not mere repetitive reports of events that happened once, but they are reports of events that actually occur twice. Now it happens that this sequence of events which happens twice, that is, (a) the death of Euridice–(b) Orpheus mourning–(c) the descent of Orpheus–(d) the reunion of Orpheus and Euridice, makes one whole: it is a closed narrative unity with a beginning (a+b), a middle part that brings about changes in the initial situation (c), and an end which reports of a situation that contrasts with the situation in the beginning and that has a particular effect on the characters (d, and e: the celebration of Amor). This sequence of events is a story in itself. But it happens twice! The complete story of Orfeo ed Euridice consists of one and the same story that actually happens twice; the sequence of events in the second sequence (the repetition) equals that of the first.

Place

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the story of Orpheus and Euridice is situated in Thrace. Calzabigi however changed the place of Euridice's death to Italy, to be precise to Campania near Lake Averno, 'in vicinanza del quale finsero i Poeti trovarsi una spelonca, che apriva il cammino all' Inferno' ('In the neighbourhood of which the poets found a cave which was thought to be hell's chimney') (Abert, 1992). Calzabigi's libretto is divided into five scenes, their boundaries being determined by environmental changes. He describes these scenes very imaginatively and lively in his *argomento* (ibidem):

PRIMA. Ameno, ma solitario boschetto di allori e di cipressi, che ad arte diradato racchiude in un piccolo piano il sepolcro d'Euridice.
SECONDO (SIC!). Orrida e cavernosa di là dal fiume Cocito, offuscata poi in lontananza da un tenebroso fumo illuminato dalle fiamme, che ingombrano tutta quella orribile abitazione.
TERZA. Deliziosa per i boschetti che vi verdeggiano, i fiori che rivestono i prati, ritiri ombrosi che vi si scuoprono, i fiumi ed i ruscelli, che la bagnano.
QUARTA. Oscura spelonca, che forma un tortuoso laberinto ingombrato di massi, staccati dalle rupi, che sono tutte coperte di sterpi, e di piante selvagge.
QUINTA. Magnifico Tempio dedicato ad Amore.

FIRST. Pleasant but solitary grove of laurels and cypresses, which in a small artificial clearing contains the tomb of Eurydice.
SECOND. Awesome, cavernous scene beyond the river Cocytus [in the Underworld], the background made murky by a dark mist lit up by the flames that cover the entire fearful area.
THIRD. A scene made charming by green groves, flower covered meadows, the shady nooks to be found there and the rivers and brooks that water it.
FOURTH. Dark cave forming a tortuous labyrinth encumbered by boulders detached from the cliffs, completely covered with brush and wild plants.
FIFTH. Magnificent temple dedicated to Amor [love].

What attracts attention in this sequence of scenes is its contrastive construction. Scene 1 breaths a peaceful and pastoral atmosphere, whereas the 'awesome' second scene, being situated in a fearful area with mist and flames, is the first scene's opposite; it presents a world which is not meant for mortals. When this fearful area is crossed, the Elysian fields emerge as a world of ultimate peace. This world resembles the world of the first scene, that is, the world of the mortal beings, in the sense that it expresses the same kind of pastoral atmosphere. However, there is one difference: whereas the peacefulness of the world of scene 1 is overshadowed by the notion of death, the Elysian fields have overcome it. As a result, the Elysian fields can be seen as the sublimation of earth, a notion which seems to be pointed to by Orpheus as he enters the Elysian fields after having enchanted the Furies at the entrance of the Underworld with his singing:

Che puro ciel, che chiaro sol,	What clear sky, what glaring sun,
Che nuova serena luce è questa mai!	What new serene light shines on to me!
Che dolce lusinghiera armonia	To what sweet and soft harmony
Formano insieme il cantar degli augelli,	Unites here the singing of the birds,
Il correr de ruscelli,	The babbling of the brooks,
Dell' aure il susurrar.	The sighing of the breezes.
Questo è il soggiorno de' fortunati Eroi	This is where the blessed heroes reside

In this setting, Euridice regains life and she is given back to Orpheus. On their way back to their own world, they must pass an area which contrasts heavily with the sublime Elysian fields: a dark cave in the form of a labyrinth. This is the setting in which Orpheus looks back to Euridice and where she dies for the second time. At this point, the action still takes place in the Underworld. In the fifth and final scene, we find ourselves back in the world of the living. Because the choir acts here as shepherds and shepherdesses, it can be concluded that this is the same pastoral world as depicted in the first scene, however with major differences: there is a festive mood because Euridice is now alive, and her tomb that was present in the first scene is changed into a temple dedicated to Amor. When the different repeated events are related to the scene in which they occur and this scene's spatial determination, this yields the following diagram (figure 4.2):

	Scene 1	Scene 2	Scene 3	Scene 4	Scene 5
Campania	Events a,b				Event e
Underworld		Event c		Events a,b,c,d	
Elysian Fields			Event d		

Figure 4.2

Event a refers to the death of Euridice; b is Orpheus mourning; c is the descent of Orpheus into the Underworld; event d is the reunion of Orpheus and Euridice; and e is the final event of celebration.

The spatial structure of *Orfeo ed Euridice* is a contrastive structure. Within this structure, Campania is the neutral level. It is the place where the action begins and where it ends. From the beginning the action moves towards the Underworld. Because it literally goes from the neutral level down to the negative, this movement can be indicated with a '-'. The following scene takes place in the Elysian fields. This movement from the Underworld to the

Elysian fields can be considered as the ultimate positive movement, to be indicated with '+ +'. Then, the action makes a sudden drop to the Underworld, the ultimate negative movement, hence '--'. From there, the movement goes upward ('+')to the neutral level again. This yields the following scheme of the spatial contrastive movements in *Orfeo ed Euridice* (figure 4.3):

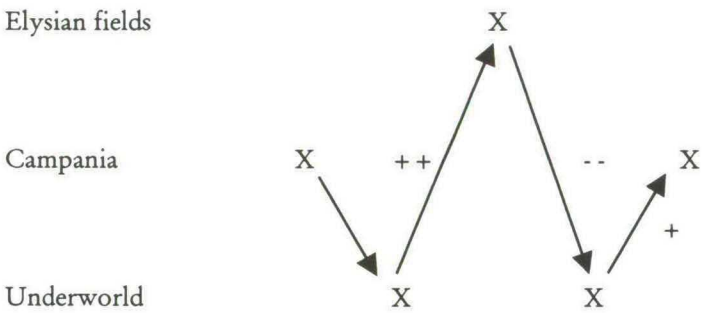

Figure 4.3

Towards the construction of an interpretant

Having described the sign in the light of its characters and events, the second step in the process of constructing an interpretant is concerned with sketching a possible direction semiosis could take. This direction should logically follow from the description of the sign, keeping in mind Peirce's definition of the ideal hypothesis as the most simple hypothesis, that is, the explanation that is most closely related to common sense (see chapter 2). Constructing an interpretant is nothing more than formulating a hypothesis, which in turn is concerned with finding an answer to the main question the reader is faced with: what is it this libretto, this sign, has to tell me? The answer to this question has to be a common sense hypothesis, which can be defined as a hypothesis that relies heavily on the information as provided by the sign in so far this information is processed by the reader and accounted for in his description of the sign. The question we have to ask ourselves here is: what significant information does the description of the sign as presented in the two previous sections yield? What relevant themes emerge from this description?

The most important theme in the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice* appears to be the theme of death versus life. Euridice's physical state functions as the backbone of the action. Her physical state determines both the emotional

state and the actions of the other characters, with the exception of Amor. Instead of sharing these human reactions the god of love invokes them: Amor's actions affect the physical state of Euridice. Because Euridice's state affects both Orpheus and the choir, it is eventually Amor who is in control of all the characters that are involved in the libretto's action. Thus Amor emerges in the description of the sign as a second important theme. The indication 'Amor' does not so much refer to the god as a physical entity, but more to what he represents. Amor is the god of love, and love emerges as one of the central issues in the libretto. Love is the motor to all of Orpheus' actions; by referring to their past ability to love, Orpheus succeeds in mollifying the Furies at the entrance of the Underworld, and in the end his loyal love for Euridice is the reason for her second resurrection. But despite his love for Euridice, Orpheus is not allowed to give her a token of his affection once reunited with her after her first resurrection: he does not refer to her beauty as he used to, nor does he embrace her and kiss her as Euridice expects from a tender consort. Euridice blames him for this, she accuses Orpheus of extinguishing the pure torch of Amor and Hymen, the god of marriage. As a result, Euridice refuses to obey his commands and prefers staying in the Underworld to going back with a cruel man who does not take her wishes and feelings into account. Seeing that she is about to die of a broken heart, Orpheus finally forgets the commandment, as well as Euridice and himself, by showing her his affection and his love. This sacrifice, it is a sacrifice for this action results in Euridice's second death, appears to be the ultimate proof of his loyalty to Amor.

The last elements of the description of the libretto that are important for the construction of an interpretant bear on the temporal-spatial structure of the action. With regard to the spatial aspect, the contrastive structure with both negative and positive movements seems to matter. The transition from the second to the third scene is one of great amplitude; it reaches from the lowest depths to the highest heights. Having reached this climax we expect the story to be finished, but it is not: the first climax is followed immediately by a second climax, an anti-climax, however, which follows the same trajectory of the first climax although in reverse order. An anti-climax put directly after a climax which we are inclined to interpret as an indication of the end of the story approaching constitutes an unexpected moment, a striking event which makes us forget the climax that came prior to it. Its striking character is intensified by the fact that this negative transition from the third to the fourth scene coincides with the beginning of the repetition of the same sequence of events that occurred in the first three acts. Combined with another striking feature of the fourth scene, its relative length in terms of duration, and the shortness of the fifth scene we are faced with some very striking features of

the libretto. If we are to form an interpretant we will have to account for these striking events.

An interpretant

Up to now two preparatory steps have been taken for constructing an interpretant: a description of the sign and summarizing this description in terms of recurring themes that judging from this description, appeared as being relevant to the task that the reader is put to. Forming an interpretant is about answering the question of what this sign has to tell me as a reader. In this section an answer to this question will be formulated.

The key to an interpretation of the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice* lies in the striking events of the fourth and fifth scenes. This is a direct consequence of the fact that both scenes attract attention because the amount of text-time as spent on them deviates from the expectations as raised by the sign: the first three scenes occupy more or less the same amount of text-time, whereas scene four exceeds this standard and the fifth scene falls far short. This last short scene is a celebration of Amor in which all characters that have played a role in the libretto participate. It states what this libretto is about: love, loyalty and beauty. These are holy concepts, judging from the fact that they are celebrated in a temple dedicated to the god Amor. Besides the spatial setting, all other available means are used to convey this central thought that is depicted in the last scene: dancing and celebrating shepherds and shepherdesses, a recurring refrain sung by the choir which mobilizes the reader to give way to love and beauty and by doing so to make Amor triumph, and short and concise accounts by all characters on the way in which they experienced this central thought. But how is this central thought related to what has been considered earlier as the main theme of the libretto, that is, the theme of life versus death?

It seems obvious to say that the theme of life versus death reinforces the central thought as expressed in the last scene. Only by celebrating love, loyalty and beauty can life be gained. It is not so strange to relate both themes to each other in this way, for eventually it is due to the aspect of 'love' that Euridice regains life and that she and Orpheus are reunited. But at the same time this leaves us puzzled, for if this indeed is the way in which the two themes are related, then why is it that after an initially succesful attempt to retrieve Euridice from the Elysian Fields she has to die for the second time? Why is it that in the fourth scene the whole sequence of events restarts? This question might be answered by taking into account Orpheus' motives for retrieving Euridice, and this has everything to do with the nature of his love for her. Orpheus' descent into the Underworld is motivated by the loss he feels

with the death of Euridice. He misses her presence, her beauty, her love. This loss makes him feel sad and depressed. Orpheus pities himself, and this depressing emotion can only be neutralized when he and Euridice are rejoined. He is alone, he misses his counterpart, although not out of altruistic love but as a necessity for the realization of his own emotional and perhaps artistic fulfilment. To Orpheus, Euridice is more of a muse than a person of flesh and blood.

The kind of utilitarian love as practized by Orpheus is not the kind of love Amor advocates. He stands for pure and altruistic love, a kind of love which is not subject to any other interests. Only when Orpheus recognizes this will Euridice resurrect. Her first resurrection, Amor's commandment, and the dispute with Euridice were necessary steps to make Orpheus consciously see this. Euridice forces him to this insight by taking up the position of a self-conscious woman who demands from her husband a token of his sincere love for her[2]. Without this love, life is not of any value to her. Euridice suffers from the kind of love Orpheus advances, she is literally dying of a broken heart. Once Orpheus has surrendered, Euridice must die for the second time: her second death is necessary to facilitate a new beginning for Orpheus and Euridice. And it is a new beginning, for although the sequence of events as layed out in the fourth scene is a condensed repetition of the sequence of events in the first three scenes, there is one major difference. The events in scene four occur within a different context, they have a different modality: there is recognition of pure love. By recognizing this Orpheus is purified, and this purification allows him to reach a state of enlightenment. Euridice's second death enables Orpheus' purification; as such it marks the moment of catharsis. Orpheus' sacrifice which results in Euridice's second death marks this moment. The sacrifice appears to be what Amor wants from Orpheus: the ultimate proof of his loyalty to Amor's true nature. Because Orpheus has succesfully passed Amor's test he and Euridice are reunited.

Orfeo ed Euridice is the report of a test, and a particular one: the sequence of events as described in this libretto can be seen as a test that functions as a rite that aims at purification of the soul, a rite that aims at enlightenment with regard to one's conception of love. This interpretation of Calzabigi's libretto can account for the contrastive spatial structure of the libretto. Reaching a state of enlightenment is a *rite de passage*: one can only see the light after having experienced darkness— the theme of life versus death in

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[2] Or could it be that she is not after true love at all, but pursuing self-assurance instead?

a metaphorical sense. In the libretto this is symbolized by Orpheus descending into the foggy and dark Underworld, and finding Euridice alive in the Elysian Fields, a place of which Orpheus sings:

Che puro ciel, che chiaro sol,	What clear sky, what glaring sun,
Che nuova serena luce è questa mai!	What new serene light shines on to me!

Now Orpheus is enlightened and his new life as an initiate can begin. This is symbolized by the reinitiation of the events as they occurred before Orpheus' purification, although with a different modality. Together with the fact that no explicit references are made either to any temporal setting of the libretto or Orpheus' musical skills, we can conclude by stating that Calzabigi's adaptation of the myth of Orpheus and Euridice should not in the first place be looked upon as a story about the magical powers of music, but that this libretto should be considered as an allegorical description of a rite that initiates altruistic love; it is a rite of initiation.

Deduction

Deduction is the second stage of inquiry. In this stage, the hypothesis as formulated in the previous stage of abduction is examined. Its purpose is to trace some logical consequences of the hypothesis. Consequences of the hypothetical interpretant, that the libretto of *Orfeo ed Euridice* is an allegorical description of a rite that initiates altruistic love, can be taken in different directions. On the one hand, consequences could be formulated that are directly related to the sign; the libretto. Such consequences would take a form such as 'if this interpretant is a valid one, then it should be possible to find indications in the sign itself that support it. This approach, however, will not be followed here. Because the previous section already involved an extensive analysis of the sign, analyzing the sign in the search for indications that support the interpretant would yield nothing more than we already have found. To avoid such circular reasoning, consequences of the hypothetical interpretant will have to be looked for in a different direction. For this purpose the interpretant is dissected into its two constituent parts. First there is the element that addresses the question of the nature of love, while as a second aspect of the interpretant the element of initiation emerges. To validate both dimensions of the interpretant we will have to search for consequences outside the sign.

In the first case, when dealing with the aspect of the nature of love, it might be useful to take a closer look at the socio-historical context in which Calzabigi wrote his libretto. It is known that Calzabigi, born 1714 in Livorno, Italy, went to Paris, where he moved in the circles of Rousseau, Diderot and

the Encyclopedists. Starting from the knowledge that Calzabigi favored their ideas (Gerritsen, 1993:82), and if it would be possible to find somewhere in the intellectual environment in which Calzabigi wrote his libretto an elaboration on the topic of self-interested love versus altruistic love, it appears to be a valid deduction that it is likely for Calzabigi to have incorporated these ideas somewhere in his literary products, in this case in his *Orfeo*-libretto.

In the second case, when dealing with the aspect of initiation, it might be fruitful to take a closer look at commentaries on the source text of Calzabigi's libretto, that is, the myth of Orpheus and Euridice as it can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Without going into details, it can be said that Calzabigi's libretto does not deviate much from Ovid's text. Adaptations that occur in the libretto relate to the length of the story as well as to the level of its content. Ovid begins with the death of Euridice and describes the events that eventually lead via lengthy accounts of Orpheus' mourning to the rejoining of Orpheus and Euridice through the violent death of Orpheus, whereas the libretto begins at the point of Euridice's funeral and works towards the rejoining of Orpheus and Euridice by applying the concept of *brevità*: the story is told in plain language and no elaborations on Orpheus' mourning after Euridice's second death are made. Besides these minor differences, two more important differences occur between both texts. Calzabigi introduces Amor as a character, and in his libretto both Orpheus and Euridice are alive at the end. Amor does not occur in Ovids' account, nor does he give back life to the two protagonists, although here too they are reunited. Despite these differences, both versions show so many similarities that there can be no doubt that Ovid has to be considered as Calzabigi's primal source text, no matter what other sources might be involved. But why examine commentaries on Ovid when dealing with a retelling of the Orpheus myth that is written almost 2000 years later? I do not know of the existence of serious and extensive commentaries on Calzabigi's libretto. Because of the secondary role which libretti have played throughout the history of opera it is hardly likely that such commentaries exist. Such commentaries, however, do exist on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the story of Orpheus and Euridice in particular. If we want to know whether it is valid or not to speak in terms of Calzabigi's libretto as an initiation rite, after having acknowledged a close relation between both versions of the myth, it is legitimate to concentrate on accounts of the source text. According to secundary literature on this source text, to what extent has it to do with initiation?

In the third and last stage of Peirce's method of science, induction, we will deal further with the question as to what extent the myth of Orpheus and Euridice can be considered as a description of an initiation rite. We will also deal with the question of whether somewhere in the intellectual historical

context in which Calzabigi wrote his libretto, evidence can be found to support the idea of an innate development in human beings from acting out of self-interested love to acting on a basis of altruistic love.

Induction

In 1762, the year that *Orfeo ed Euridice* was premiered, an important work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau also saw the light of day: *Émile ou de l'éducation*. The central issue in *Émile* is that a good and virtuous human being is not the product of an education which is based on conformism and pressure; a type of education that deprives the child of his free creativity. Instead, only the one for whom it is not necessary to dispossess others for his self-preservation and with whom, as a result of this, all proper characteristics have developed harmoniously, can be good and virtuous (Rousseau, 1980:41-42). In *Émile*, Rousseau describes how this goal can be achieved. He introduces a fictitious tutor, Jean-Jacques, who is responsible for the upbringing of Emile. Jean-Jacques preserves his protégé from the harmful influences of urban society by putting him in quarantine, that is, Emile will not be exposed to the world until his tutor is certain that Emile has built up enough resistance to cope with the evil forces in urban society. Jean-Jacques builds a virtual fence around Emile that provides him with a safe environment, situated in the countryside where life is still natural and pure, in which Emile has every opportunity to develop himself without unnecessary distractions. This first stage of development aims at developing the physical, the body needs to be strengthened to prevent the heart from vice and the mind from digression: 'The body must be strong enough to obey the mind; a good servant must be strong. [...] The weaker the body, the more imperious its demands; the stronger it is, the better it obeys. All sensual passions find their home in effeminate bodies. The less satisfied they are the more irritated they feel' (Rousseau, 1999:I-103). During childhood, that is during the first fifteen years of the child's life, nature should be followed. Nature indicates what the child needs to know and what it needs to have; reason and reasoning do not come into play yet, and whatever the child needs to learn is learned by experience.

All that the child is concerned with in the first stage of his life and what forms the basis for his actions, is his own well-being. Rousseau connects this to the concept of *amour-de-soi*: '*Amour-de-soi* signifies a concern, a care, to look to, guard, preserve and foster one's own personal well-being, guided by a true and clear sense or idea of what the well-being of oneself comprises and requires' (Dent, 1988:20). According to Rousseau, the innate *amour-de-soi* is the only passion that is truly fundamental for our self-preservation; all other passions are merely variants of this original passion. Our experience of the

environment is established by the authority of this love for ourselves. Rousseau continues: '*Amour de soi-même* is always good and always in accordance with order. Each of us being charged especially with our own preservation, the first and the most important of our cares is and ought to be to ceaselessly watch over it; and how can we continually watch over it, if we do not take the greatest interest in it?' (Rousseau, 1999:IV-753).

Emile spends the first fifteen years of his life in complete isolation, with only his tutor being present to educate him; Emile only has to take care of himself without having to take others into consideration. This period completely stands under the influence of *amour-de-soi*, the innocent instinct for self-preservation. However, there comes a moment when Emile is called by nature to find himself a mate so that the species can perpetuate. This is the moment at which he leaves his childhood; it is his second birth— 'It is now that man is truly born to life and that nothing human is foreign to him' (ibidem:IV-748). An inevitable part of the natural process of finding a mate is the instinctive need to compare oneself with others. This instinct is called *amour-propre*. It makes sure that we are taken seriously in our encounters with others, of whatever kind these encounters might be. 'It is our *amour-propre* that directs us [...] towards ensuring that we are met, heeded and honoured as a person of significance standing in our own being as such' (Dent, 1988:56).] *Amour-propre* can never be fully satisfied, for 'this sentiment, which prefers ourselves to others, requires also that others prefer us to themselves, which is impossible' (Rousseau, 1999:IV-756).

In our relation to others we want to be looked upon and to be treated as significant others, and if we do not manage to accomplish this 'we are caused to feel we do not exist as human at all, that we have been eliminated from the forum of human interchange' (Dent, 1988:117). This is why *amour-propre* can easily lead to conflicts with other human beings; this is why all hateful and irrascible passions are born from this fundamental passion. However, *amour-propre* does not necessarily involve negative passions. According to Rousseau, all passions can be directed to either good or evil, although he points to the fact that *amour-propre* rarely goes without evil; '*amour-propre* in itself or relative to us is good and useful [...] It becomes good or evil only by what it is applied to and by the relations it is given' (Rousseau 1999:II-267). When it becomes evil, Nicholas Dent suggests speaking of 'inflamed' *amour-propre*. 'If and when my *amour-propre* is 'inflamed', I claim to myself a title and significance for others in their thoughts, feelings, deliberations and actions, which is very great indeed. I wish to be a very 'large' presence for them in their lives' (Dent, 1988:57-58). *Amour-propre* can become excessive. We can only hope that it is not going to develop into this direction. This is certainly not going to happen to Emile. With regard to Emile, 'he will realize that al-

though secure possession of standing is necessary and good, to have that is not the absolute be-all and end-all of his viability and self-conservation altogether' (ibidem:116). What is important, what matters most in human life is our love for the other. Rousseau does not mean love in the form of a remote relation, but he advocates love as the intimate encounter between individuals. This kind of love is 'the greatest felicity of human experience' (ibidem:152). It is a dangerous kind of love for it demands a far-reaching openness of the self, the lover is 'skinlessly exposed in all his hopes and fears' (ibidem); nevertheless it is exactly this intimacy between people which can grow into what is called universal love, a real love for everyone that begins on a small scale with the love for an individual human being and that spreads through society. Rousseau sees this bond between people as the fundament of a just and humane society: justice is done 'when, and only when, each several separate person has justice: 'universal' love is love for each particular person as precious, until it encompasses every one' (ibidem, 143). The kind of love as advanced by Rousseau and that he sees as the fundament of humanity is an altruistic love, for it demands from the individual, from the self, the ability and the willingness to recognize the other as a significant and moral human being, just as I expect the other to see me in my own human standing. What it comes down to is allowing others to have their *amour-propre* too, and respecting this in them (ibidem:144).

Amour-propre is at the same time directed to the self and to the other; it is about respecting the other in his individuality as a significant human being just as we expect the other to have the same view of us. Calzabigi's libretto *Orfeo ed Euridice* can be considered a thematic exploration of this idea. *Orfeo ed Euridice* is about human relations, more specifically about how to behave in such a way that justice is done to others as the ultimate way of improving and enriching their lives. What it comes down to is respecting the other in its individuality, and not to impose any thoughts, feelings and actions. Orpheus violates this basic rule when he tries to take Euridice with him from the Underworld: he does not give her an explanation for his strange behaviour, nor does he give his wife any sign of his love for her. Orpheus takes Euridice for granted, and to him it is obvious that she should be submissive to him. However, Euridice's dignity as a self-conscious individual is affected, and she by no means intends to assume the role as assigned to her by Orpheus. At the same time Orpheus puts his own human standing at risk by this inflamed *amour-propre*. As soon as Orpheus has recognized the errors of his ways Amor comes into action and he raises Euridice for the second time. *Trionfi Amore*![3]

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[3] There is an other side to this picture. In the relation between Orpheus and Euridice not only the *amour-propre* of Orpheus is at issue, Euridice's *amour-propre* also plays a role. We can say that Orpheus' *amour-propre* is inflamed because he offends

Now we have dealt with the intellectual historical context in which Calzabigi wrote his libretto, what remains to be done is finding out whether it is appropriate to consider the myth of Orpheus and Euridice as the description of an initiation rite.

To us Orpheus is best known as the musician, as the minstrel who can enchant wild animals and trees with his singing— Orpheus, the incarnation of the power of music. But there is more to him. Orpheus is also the lover who follows his wife Euridice down into the Underworld in an attempt to retrieve her from death; however, as Emmet Robbins argues, this has been considered a rather unimportant feature in Greek tradition (Robbins, 1982:4). More important was yet another feature of Orpheus: the mythical image of Orpheus as a priest, of Orpheus as the founder of the Orphic movement. It is this aspect of Orpheus that we are interested in here in our analysis of *Orfeo ed Euridice.*

As far as the idea of initiation is concerned, Calzabigi could not have picked better packing than the story of Orpheus and Euridice: since its early Greek beginnings a movement has persisted that sees the figure of Orpheus as the embodiment of the phenomenon of initiation. 'Stellt man die Frage ganz streng: was verkörpert Orpheus als Gestalt?, so ist es die Idee einer Initiation, die auch die wildesten Wesen, Tiere und in der Wildernis lebende Männer verwandelt [...] durch etwas, was die jungen Männer in der wilden Natur [...] erlebten' (Kerényi, 1950:55). Orpheus as the personification of a man's initiation into maturity. In the course of history this ritual purification gained the company of a more spiritual movement; a movement that took the idea of initiation, of purification, not literally, but that dealt with it on a more metaphorical level. This movement is known as the movement of Orphism. Orphism 'verbindet eine ganz körperliche Anschauung von der Welt mit einer Vorliebe für heilige Bücher' (ibidem:40)— a blend of Dionysos and Apollo. The sacred books of Orphism describe the condition of man before and after initiation, initiation being considered as a voyage from darkness to light that travels through all elements: earth, air, fire and water (Van den Berk, 1994:105).

Initiation into the secrets of Orphism is, together with leading an Orphic life, a prerequisite for salvation. Leading an Orphic life involves moral goodness and leading the life of a vegetarian, which does not only mean that

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her human dignity by not giving any sign of his true affection. At the same time, however, Euridice does a similar thing: she demands a particular behavior from Orpheus, but as it becomes clear to her that he cannot comply to this she is about to drop him— the *amour-propre* of Euridice is as inflamed as that of Orpheus. Both have to learn.

one renounces the consumption of meat, but it goes much further by abstaining from using any animal products (leather, wool). This extreme vegetarianism, which is called 'veganism', is a direct result of the Orphic belief in reincarnation and transmigration. These doctrines are described in detail by Plato in *Phaedrus* and summarized by W. Guthrie as follows:

> Soul is of one nature, whether it belong to men or gods, and exists at first in the highest region of heaven. But not all souls are perfect, and some cannot stay at that height. These fall, until they come into contact with what is solid (corporeal), and are then forced to take to themselves material bodies to inhabit. [...] At the first incarnation, it is 'law' that a soul enter the body of a man and not of a beast. [...] Once fallen, the soul cannot return to its true home, the highest heaven, until after ten thousand years, divided into ten periods of a thousand years each, each period representing one incarnation and the period of punishment or blessedness which must follow it. [...] In the ordinary course of events, the souls after their first life are judged, and some go to prisons under the earth, others to heaven. [...] When the thousand years are coming to an end, it is given them to choose a second life [...]. At this point it is possible for the soul of a man to become that of a beast, and the souls of a beast may become that of a man, with the reservation [...] that it must have been that of a man first of all. (Guthrie, 1952:167)

Since the soul of a man may be reborn in an animal, and may rise again from animal to man it follows that all life is akin. Eating animals or using animal products would be an act of cannibalism, an immoral act of violence. Orpheus taught his followers to abstain from killing, a ban extended not only to daily life, but also to sacrifices offered to the gods (ibidem:199). Furthermore, he revealed the ways of initiation. It is not known what these rites actually involved, but it is likely that prayers were involved which might have accompanied sacrifices and other rites. More important, however, is the purpose of initiation. The uninitiated were considered immoral and unclean; in their afterlife in Hades they would be consigned to the filth, to dwell in the mud; they were condemned to endless water-carrying in leaky vessels, whereas the initiated would dwell with the gods. The initiated Orphic believed himself to be living his last life before the final release of his soul from his body. His salvation was near; the moment at which the soul could free itself from the body it had been fettered to as a punishment for previous sin.

A hypothetical interpretant was formulated that interpreted Calzabigi's libretto *Orfeo ed Euridice* not as a story about the magical powers of music, but as an allegorical description of a rite that initiates a clear vision on the true nature of love. Induction seems to validate this interpretant: evidence for it could be found by taking a closer look at the intellectual environment in

which Calzabigi wrote his libretto and by taking into consideration the historical notion of the figure of Orpheus as a personification of initiation.

Here we conclude our semiotic analysis of the libretto. The following chapter will take the music of Gluck into account.

CHAPTER 5

THE MUSIC OF *ORFEO ED EURIDICE*

Introduction

In chapter three it was said that music is meant to be listened to. Music is motion, and to listen to music is to follow this motion from its beginning to its end. Listening to music is like embarking on a dark ride: one does not know exactly what is to come, although to a certain extent predictions can be made about the direction the ride could take. Problems or unexpected surprises that are likely to occur during this trajectory cannot be fully solved in real time, the subject must endure them. Only at the end of the ride it is possible to solve these problems; for this purpose it is required to take refuge in the written music, the score. No longer are we dealing then with an aural semiotics, a semiotics of listening, but with a visual semiotics, a semiotics of reading in which problems are solved through the stages of abduction, deduction, and induction.

Abduction

Abduction with regard to the written musical score consists of three subroutines. First we must specify the problem: what happens where in the discourse, and why do we consider it a problem? After having answered these questions it is necessary to think of a way out of the problem: in what direction could we search for the hypothesis? Finally we arrive at the point at which an hypothesis, a possible explanation for the surprising phenomenon can be formulated.

Defining the problem

The mid-eighteenth century, the period in which Gluck wrote his music for *Orfeo ed Euridice*, was a period of transition. On the one hand there was the influence of the baroque era, the music of which was referred to as the old conservative style. On the other hand there were the ideas of Enlightenment that gradually became dominant. These ideas had a strong influence on all aspects of eighteenth century life, including its music. Music, as was the case

with the other arts as well, had to be natural, which meant that it should charm and please the audience with pleasant natural sounds and a clear, logical structure. This meant the definitive end of baroque counterpoint with its abundant ornamentation and its complex structure. The ideal music of the eighteenth century could be described as a music that is both noble and entertaining, that is expressive within the boundaries of decency; that is free of all unnecessary technical complications. Music had to be written in a popular style, a style which was referred to by the term *style galant*. Besides this free, light, proto-classical style a second style can be associated with the music of the eighteenth century: *Empfindsamkeit*, a style of refined sensitivity and melancholy which employs techniques such as chromatism, and agitated rhythmical figures, incorporated in a free speechlike melody and a harmonical structure with unexpected twists— at the same time an inheritance and an intensification of the baroque period. What both styles have in common is their emphasis on melody; the music of the eighteenth century predominantly focuses on the melodic aspect of music. These melodies have a clear and orderly structure that is usually articulated in a relatively short period of four bars. Furthermore, they are accompanied by harmonical progressions that are governed by the movement from tonic to dominant, but where these harmonical progressions generally move with a much slower pace than the harmonical progression of most baroque music.

The developments in the music of the eighteenth century also had their impact on the genre of opera. Just like any other art form, opera had to comply to the demand of naturalness. Operatic music that was written under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment closely follows the prosody of the text, and unnecessary ornamentations and repetitions of syllables which might upset intelligibility are avoided. It can be said that the eighteenth-century reform of opera involved the restoration of the initial conception of opera as a logocentric art form, just as it was in the beginning with the operatic works by the Camerata and Monteverdi. The music that Gluck composed for *Orfeo ed Euridice* was the initiator of this reform of the genre of opera. Although *galant* or proto-classical elements do occur in Gluck's score in the form of, for example, its clear structure and the absence of polyphonous counterpoint, the score belongs more to the realms of *Empfindsamkeit* with its baroquish atmosphere— in fact, Orfeo has some features that seem to be more in place in the early eighteenth century than in the 1760's: Gluck's score abounds in features that seem to be derived from the rich musical resources of the baroque period. These features can be divided into at least three areas: the symbolic use of keys; tone painting and the use of musical tropes; and the use of baroque dance rhythms.

Symbolic use of keys

Music in the baroque period was governed by the idea that the listener should be stimulated to virtuousness. The use of keys played an important role in this: each key was considered to represent a particular range of affects. In 1713, Johann Mattheson described this combination of keys and their affects in *Das neu eröffnete Orchester*. Of the key of C major he said that this is a rather rough and forward key, particularly useful to express happiness. C minor on the other hand is at the same time both charming and sad, and it even makes one sleepy. The key of F major can express the most beautiful and tender feelings, whereas its minor parallel is associated with despair and deadly fear, it expresses dark helpless melancholy. D major is sharp and obstinate, which makes it into a key that can be perfectly used for noisy, cheerful, belligerent pieces, but when used with soft instruments like flutes and violins a delicate expression can be obtained.

Although it also deviates from this baroque theory of the affective substance of the different keys, for the greater part the score for *Orfeo ed Euridice* seems to embrace this theory. After the ouverture the choir and Orpheus enter with a lament on Euridice's death, entirely set in the key of C minor (figure 5.1):

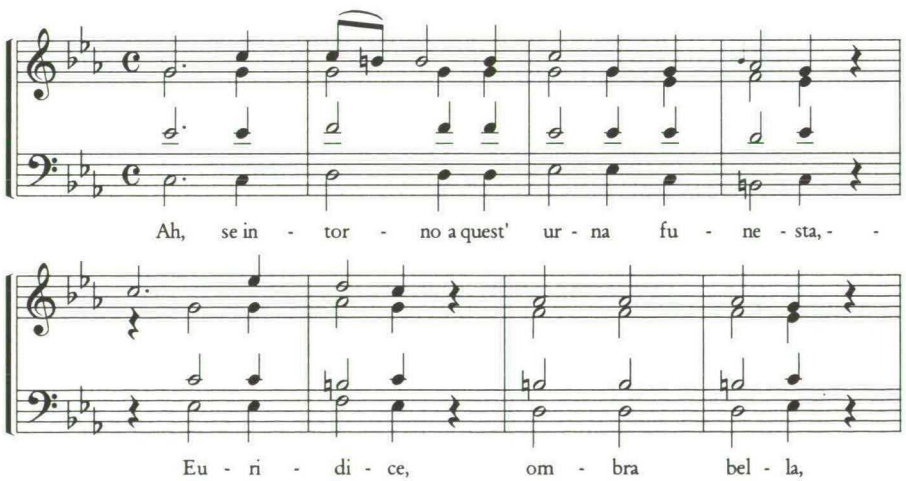

Figure 5.1

In the baroque period the key of C minor was considered as the perfect key to express feelings of intense sadness. Gluck uses it here for this lament, which as a consequence immediately sets the tone for the first part of the opera. This first part moves between Orpheus' mixed feelings of sadness regarding the loss

of his beloved on the one hand and his enduring love for her on the other. Orpheus expresses his feelings in a sequence of accompagnatos and recitatives which are grouped in such a a wy that a kind of rondo form emerges: accompagnato (A), recitative (B), accompagnato (A'), recitative (B'), accompagnato (A''). All three accompagnatos are written in F major, a key that expresses the most beautiful and tender feelings; here Orpheus' warm feelings for Euridice shine through his tears in what is at the same time both a lament and a declaration of love (figure 5.2):

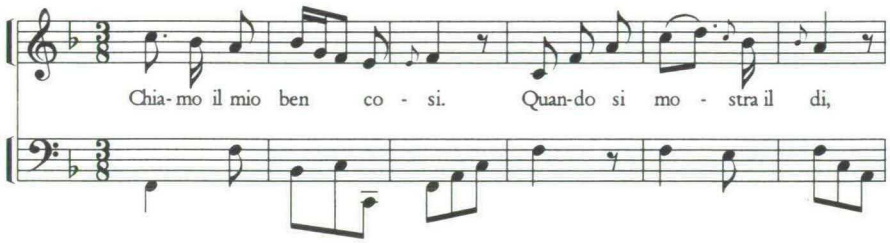

Figure 5.2

Although the text seems to focus on Orpheus' lament, by using the key of F major the music emphasizes the love that lies behind the sadness of Orpheus. Depicting Orpheus' sadness is the purpose of the music in the recitatives. These recitatives are not written in one key, but rather they move through various keys. It is significant that Orpheus' first recitative within the sequence of three accompagnatos and two recitatives begins in F minor, in baroque theory perhaps the most dark key, that is used to express wild despair and intense sadness (figure 5.3):

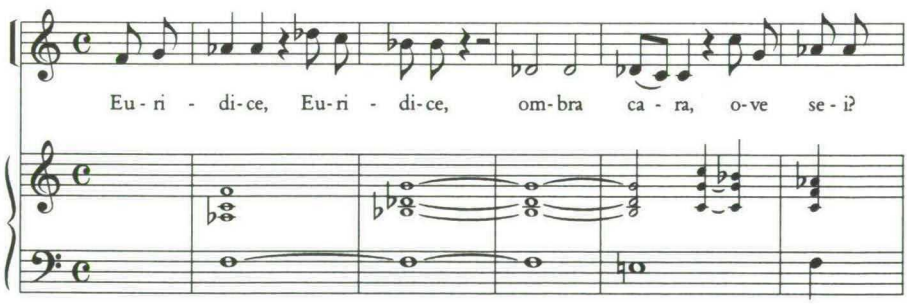

Figure 5.3

The effect of using the key of F minor is enlarged by its contrastive placing directly after an accompagnato in F major.

In the score for *Orfeo ed Euridice* the key of C minor dominates; all other keys that are used, that is, E flat major, C major, F minor, F major and G major, are related to the dominant key with the exception of one: the key of D major. D major stands relatively far away from C minor. Gluck uses it in some ballets, but also for the final scene, which is governed by this key. Being governed by a key that can be considered as a somewhat exotic element in a C minor context, the final scene becomes a scene on its own. Its autonomous status is strengthened by the fact that it almost completely consists of a series of ballets that together form a French suite. After the final ballet Orpheus, Euridice, Amor and the choir end the opera with a hymn to Amor (figure 5.4):

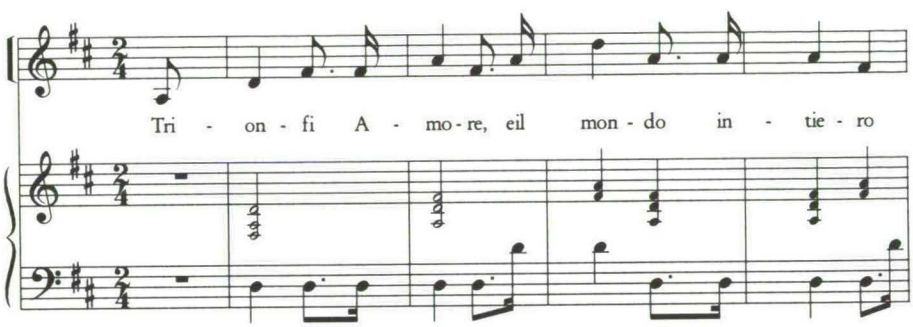

Figure 5.4

Whenever a composer from the baroque period intended to express a festive celebrating mood he would use of the key of D major. The final scene of *Orfeo ed Euridice* is an elaborate celebration of Amor with the final *coro* a festive triumphal march to his honor, written in the key of D major—yet another example of how Gluck was inspired by baroque theories.

Tone painting and the use of musical tropes

Not only does the score for *Orfeo ed Euridice* show a baroque use of keys regarding the expression of affects, it also abounds in the application of musical tropes which serve the purpose of tone painting, again a practice that has more to do with the early eighteenth century than with the period in which Gluck wrote the music for this opera. In *Orfeo ed Euridice* different tech-

niques are used for the purpose of tone painting; a way of composing in which the music expresses the text as literally as possible (cf. chapter 1). Gluck uses *Seufzer* and *appogiatura* figures for a melodical expression of sadness, sorrow and torment. He does so, for example, in the opening lament of the choir and Orpheus, and in Orpheus' famous aria *Che farò senza Euridice?* ('S' indicates Seufzer, 'A' stands for appogiatura— figure 5.5):

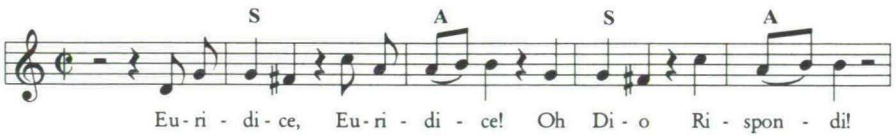

Figure 5.5

When Orpheus tries to mollify the Furies in his attempt to enter the Underworld, at first the Furies show hostile behavior towards him, this hostility being musically expressed in the accompaniment of the orchestra by agitated sixteenth triplets and very quick grace notes in thirtyseconds (figure 5.6):

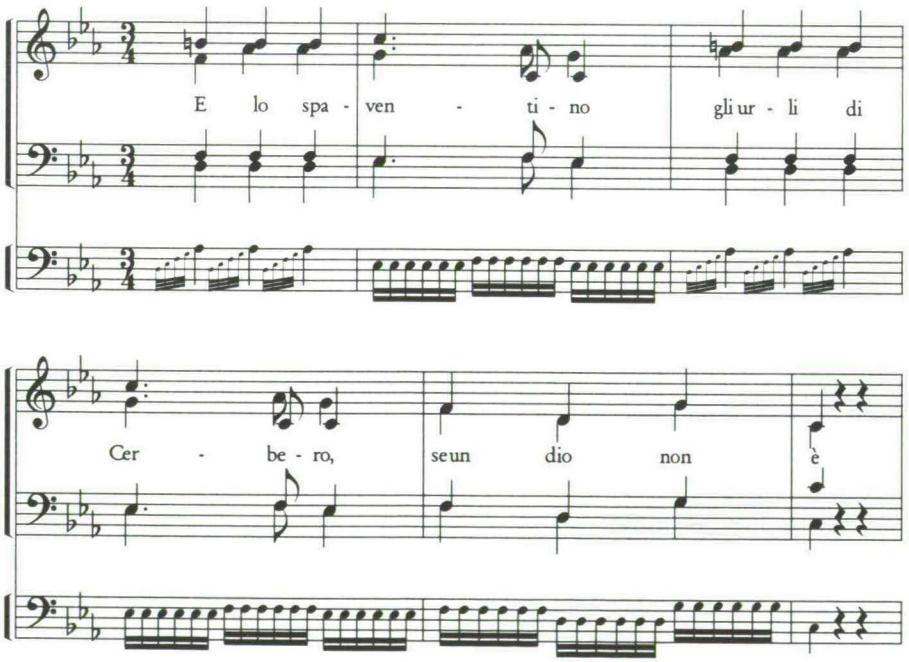

Figure 5.6

An outstanding example of tone painting can be found in Gluck's musical depiction of the Elysium once Orpheus has been granted access to this place where the blessed spirits reside. It is a piece that breathes a peaceful pastoral atmosphere. Gluck achieves this by employing the four musical categories pitch, duration, loudness and timbre in such a way that there can be no misunderstanding with regard to the mood the orchestra is to convey. The musical depiciton of the Elysium begins in the key of C major, a proper key to let joy take its own course, but it modulates into the key of A minor, a key that, although it can be used for the expression of whatever emotion, has a soft complaining undercurrent that can rouse compassion. This is a logical choice of modulation given the fact that it is not Orpheus' aim to experience the Elysian world, but to be reunited with Euridice—as long as he has not yet reached his goal, it is impossible for Orpheus to rejoice, although his first experience with the Elysium comes close to breaking his emotional state.

The pastoral atmosphere in Gluck's musical depicition of the Elysium is heightened by the movement of the first violins. Although this piece is written in a 4/4 time signature the first violins continually play sixteenth triplets. In combination with the hymn-like melody played by the oboe in 4/4 time, a 12/8 time signature is suggested, a time signature that we find in many pastoral pieces from the baroque period, for example, the *Pifa* in Handel's *Messiah* and the symphony that forms the prelude to the second cantata of Bach's *Weihnachtsoratorium*. The use of instruments is also significant: in the baroque period the traverso is associated with the idyllical life of the shepherds, whereas the oboe represents the nasal sound of *the* pastoral instrument of the sixteenth century: the bagpipe, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries imitated by the use of oboes. The occurrence of the horn might be inspired by the fact that this instrument is associated with life in the countryside.

Real tone painting in the musical depiction of the Elysium is concentrated on the imitation of bird song. The solo traverso plays a duet with the solo cello, freely flowing over and between the other instruments (figure 5.7):

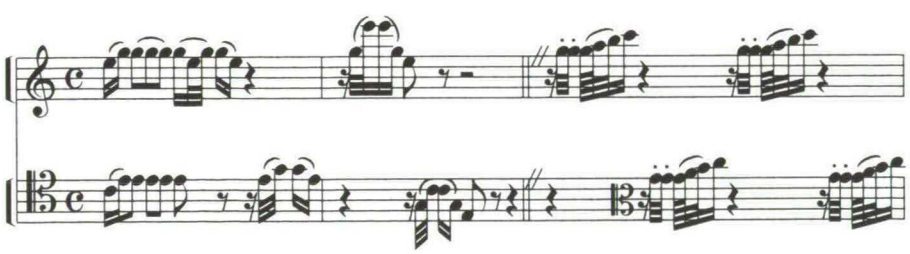

Figure 5.7

The second violin joins in this little game with interruptions of short ornamented trills as to complete the image of birds that fly freely through the skies of the Elysian Fields (figure 5.8):

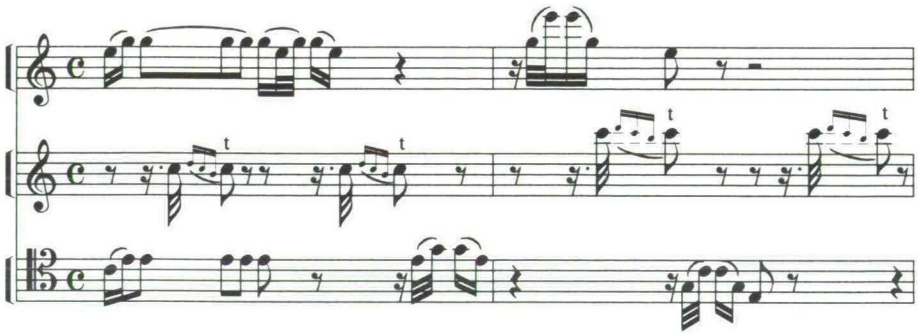

Figure 5.8

The use of baroque dance rhythms

Gluck's symbolical use of different keys as well as the way in which he uses musical tropes for tone painting are evidently relics of the baroque period, the influence of which can be seen throughout the entire score for *Orfeo ed Euridice*. However, what definitely makes this score into a last convulsion of the baroque period rather than into a herald of the classical period is the omnipresence of baroque dance rhythms. Not only do they occur in the many ballets, they also frequently appear as a rhythmical foundation for the vocal parts.

To begin with the instrumental ballets, Gluck seems to favor the menuet. The menuet, originally a folkdance in triple meter with a quick tempo and a gay character, is best known in its form of a solemn, rather slow court dance. In this form it was cultivated at the French court once having been introduced there in the seventeenth century. After its introduction at court, 'the menuet enjoyed great popularity as a theatrical and a ballroom dance: examples to be sung were featured in all musical stage works and were choreographed for all court occasions' (Mather, 1987:269). Most menuets in *Orfeo ed Euridice* belong to this type of court menuet, for example the menuet that is played when Orpheus enters the Elysium (figure 5.9):

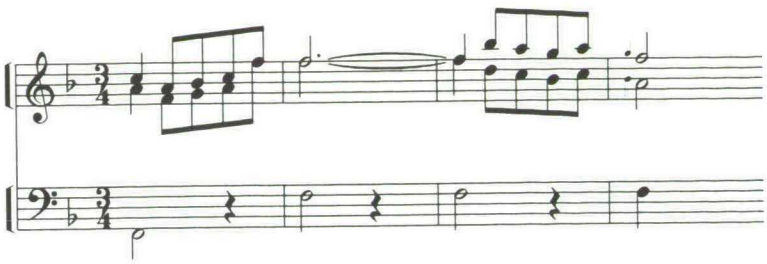

Figure 5.9

Instrumental ballets occur at several points in the score. The longest sequence of ballets can be found at the beginning of the final scene. This scene starts with a march, which is to be followed by a menuet that forms the first part of what becomes an orchestral suite in four parts. After the first menuet a *contredanse en rondeau*, a musette and a chaconne (with double-upbeat) follow. These four dances are harmonically related in the sense that the menuet is written in the key of A major, the contredanse in A minor, and the musette modulates to D major, which is also the key of the concluding chaconne. The suite is followed by the final chorus.

As previously said, the baroque dance rhythms do not only occur in the form of instrumental ballets; they also emerge in many of the vocal lines in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Here menuets can be found as well, but other dance rhythms occur also, for example, the galliard in the dance of the Furies when Orpheus tries to enter the Underworld (figure 5.10):

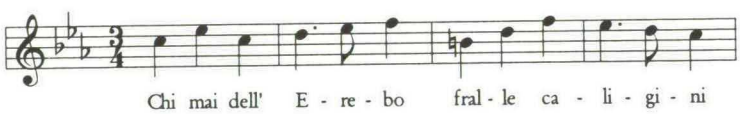

Figure 5.10

Most dance rhythms that appear in *Orfeo ed Euridice* are solemn, relatively slow and stately, just as they appeared in the operas of the French baroque. This established a relation between the Gluck and Calzabigi opera and the baroque court opera, especially the French *tragédy lyrique* as invented, monopolized and consummated by Jean-Baptiste Lully and his librettist Phillipe Quinault in praise of Lully's patron Louis XIV. These French elements in the score make Gluck's music into a stately, elevated, graceful composition; into an opera with royal grandeur. The direct connection between the music of

Orfeo ed Euridice and the genre of the baroque French court opera that is suggested here contributes to the idea that this opera has less to do with the classical period than with the baroque period. *Orfeo ed Euridice* could be seen as a postbaroque court opera, as an anachronism that appears in an era in which royalty and nobility become less and less important in favor of a new power: the middle class.

Besides the dance rhythms from the French baroque another element appears in Gluck's score that supports this idea. At the beginning of the second act, prior to Orpheus' confrontation with the Furies, the following instrumental introduction is played (figure 5.11):

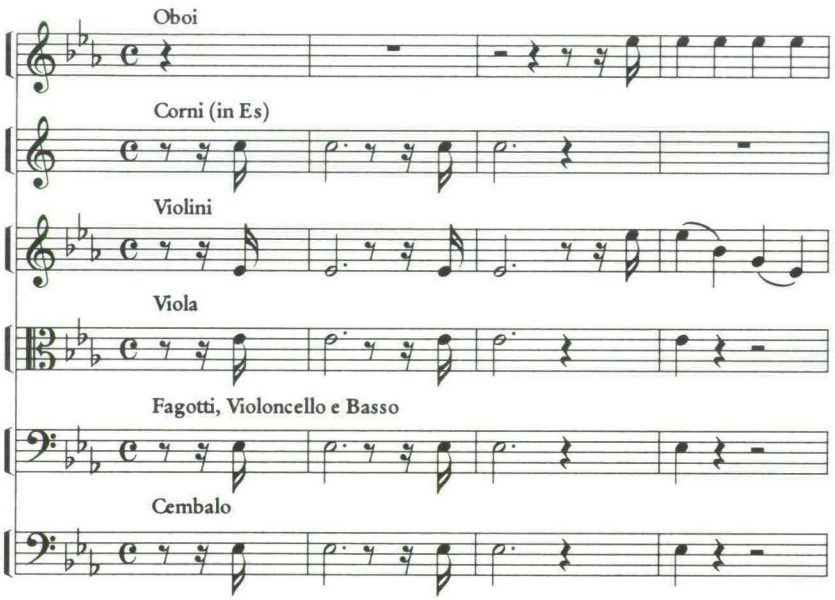

Figure 5.11

The trumpet-like signals that are played here by the orchestra in the typical pattern of a short upbeat followed by a long downbeat, this pattern being played here thrice, also originate directly from the French baroque: they form the beginning of the French ouverture, the instrumental genre that Lully institutionalized and with which he began his stage works. In its original context the predominant function of the French ouverture was to welcome the king and to glorify him. A French ouverture thus is ritual music that marks a significant and elevated event. We are used to the habit that such ouvertures are placed at the beginning of an opera. Gluck, however, positions it at the

beginning of the second act, as if he is trying to tell us that everything prior to the ouverture is more of a prolog than a first act, and that the opera proper is only now to begin. A strange moment for an ouverture to appear, and it gets weirder. Although it seems that a French ouverture is played, we are dealing here with the suggestion of an ouverture, for only its characteristic rhythmical pattern is adopted by Gluck. The remainder of its structure yields nothing that can support the idea that this instrumental introduction actually is a French ouverture. A typical French ouverture has a triadic structure that begins with a slow movement which to a certain extent makes use of the already mentioned rhythmical structure of short upbeat and long downbeat, and that continues with a faster *fugato* movement which is followed with a slightly altered reprise of the first part. Apart from the rhythmical characteristic of the first part of the French ouverture, none of the other characteristics as mentioned are present here. Gluck applies a different structure: he repeats the 'trumpet signals' twice, each reprise being transposed up a major second higher (from E flat major through F major to G major), whereas in the third reprise the rhythmical pattern is reduced to two signals. Here we have a striking event in the score of *Orfeo ed Euridice*: we are saddled with a French ouverture which is not a French ouverture, and it appears at a strange moment. An explanation is called for; this is where semiosis actually begins.

A way out

At the beginning of the second act Gluck creates an intriguing moment for his audience. He seems to introduce a French ouverture which, however, is not an instance of the genre because it deviates too far from the typical structure. In the previous section a possible explanation was hypothesized in which everything prior to the second act was more of a prolog than a real intrinsic part of the opera which begins with the second act. Actually, this is a valid hypothesis, for it can be said that the first dramatic action of the opera is embodied in this second act: Orpheus' descent into the Underworld. This second scene urges Gluck to write some very effective dramatic music which together with the action as put forward by the libretto makes this scene from the viewpoint of dramatic action into a very dynamic one, especially in comparison with the first act that has more the character of a series of static *tableaux* than something that can be called a truly dramatical operatic unity: Euridice has died and Orpheus mourns; that is all that happens in the first act.

On the basis of the considerations above it could be concluded that indeed the opera begins with the second act, that the first act is a prolog, and that the French ouverture (or what is left of it) announces this transition. But

this explanation does not suffice. At the end of the first act a turbulent instrumental piece that mainly consist of very fast scales and *arpeggios* is played which could serve perfectly as a transition between the first and the second act, even when the first act is to be considered as a prolog. Why place one transitional instrumental piece directly after another? We could answer this question by saying that because of this the transition is made even sharper, and that Gluck needed something that resembles a French ouverture as a clear sign to the audience that the 'interesting' part of the opera was now to begin. But then why did he not write a full or at least a more stylistically 'correct' French ouverture? This would certainly not have been out of place in a score that is imbued with other elements of the French baroque court opera. Why this limitation to the ouverture's typical rhythmical structure that is repeated thrice, each time transposed a major second up?

In our quest for a satisfying explanation for the striking moment Gluck presents us with, help might come from an unexpected source: Mozart's score for *Die Zauberflöte*, written in 1791, 29 years after the Viennese premiere of *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Both in the ouverture to Mozart's opera and at the beginning of the second act we hear this (figure 5.12):

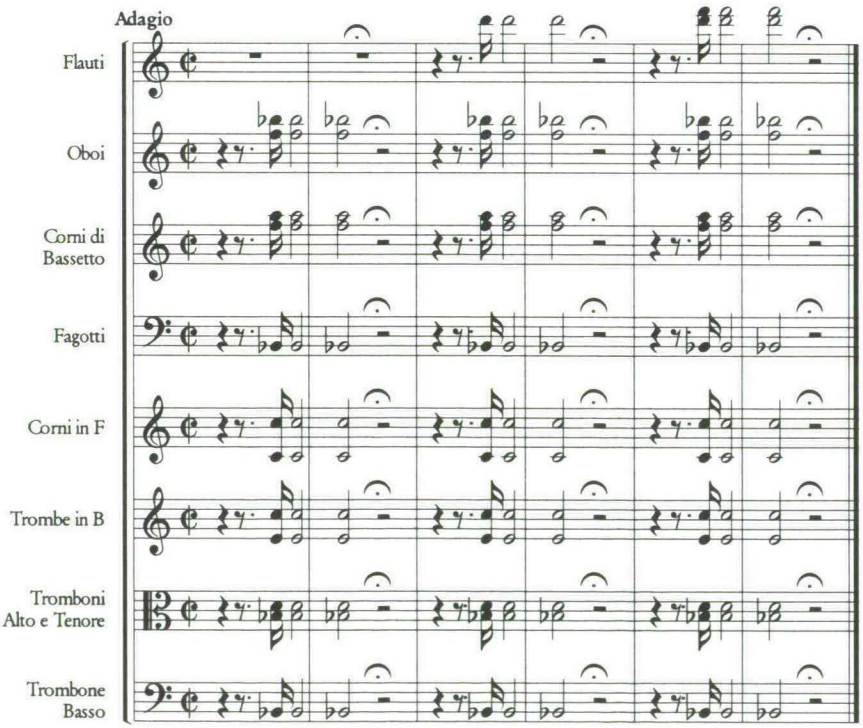

Figure 5.12

This structure, *Der dreimalige Accord* as it is called in the score, shows remarkable similarities with Gluck's French ouverture in *Orfeo ed Euridice*: it too suggests the beginning of a French ouverture, but only the typical trumpet signals are played; this rhythmical pattern is played three times (a difference is that Mozart does not transpose the pattern in contrast with Gluck); both are placed somewhere in the opera instead of at the very beginning of it, and both are placed at the beginning of the second act, an act in which in both operas the protagonist is subject to a series of trials which seems to be the core of the opera. Great similarities thus between both operas regarding the occurrence of the ouverture-like signalling rhythmical pattern, which means that there is reason to believe that a clue to solving the problem Gluck created for us might be found by considering his music for *Orfeo ed Euridice* in the light of Mozart's music for *Die Zauberflöte* (1791).

A possible explanation

'Een stuk dat zoodanig verward, laf en onnatuurlijk is dat wij bijna gelooven dat de maker van hetzelve met krankzinnigheid behebt was toen hij hetzelve vervaardigde... Wij kunnen niet begrijpen hoe de groote Mozart zulk een fraaie muziek voor zoo een prulwerk vervaardigde'[1]. An exemplary review of *Die Zauberflöte*, written by Van Slingelandt in the year 1812 (cited in Van den Berk, 1994:18). Exemplary, because for long this has been the predominant way in which the opera was perceived: fine music, but a rambling, illogical and confusing libretto; 'elevated hodgepodge' as Patrick Smith called Schikaneder's libretto (Smith 1970, 186). Whether or not these judgements may have a point, things are put in a completely different light when the opera is placed in the historical context in which it was created by Schikaneder and Mozart. This is the context of Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century, a period in which an esoteric atmosphere dominated spiritual life in the captial of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy (Van den Berk, 1994). All kinds of esoteric societies emerged, but it can be said that perhaps the most important of these societies was Freemasonry.

The first Masonic society, the first Lodge, was founded in London in 1717. Masonic Lodges are speculative fraternities, the members of which (called 'Masons' and referring to each other as 'Brother') seek spiritual development. Elaborated and rich symbolism is at the disposal of the Masons as an

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[1] 'A piece that is so confused, insipid and artificial that we almost believe its maker to have been cursed with insanity when he wrote it... We cannot understand how the great Mozart could write such fine music for such hack work'.

aid in this personal quest for enlightenment. Early Lodges derived this symbolism from the world of medieval operative Masonry, which proved to be an excellent resource for the development of a symbolical language that was applicable to life itself (Van den Abeele, 1991:24). In this way, Freemasonry became a spiritual variant of the medieval operative masonic guilds that conscientiously cherished their professional secrets.

Being founded on the British Isles the number of lodges in England, Scotland and Ireland increased rapidly: halfway through the eighteenth century almost each community had its own lodge. Its success brought Freemasonry also to the United States and the Continent where lodges attracted the attention of prominent figures such as politicians, members of the aristocracy, artists and even clergymen. One of them was Francis of Lorraine, later emperor Franz I. He was initiated as a Mason in 1731, and it was he, the husband of Empress Maria Theresia, who brought Masonry to Austria. This paved the way for the first Viennese lodge to be opened in 1742. From 1760 on new lodges emerged in Vienna. After Joseph II was crowned emperor in 1780, Masonry in Austria expanded enormously: by 1785 the Grandlodge of Austria had about 800 Masons registered. In this year however this strong development was interrupted when Joseph issued his *Freimaurerpatent* in which Masonry was placed under public control. Only two lodges survived, *Zur Wahrheit* and *Zur neugekrönten Hoffnung*. With the first being discontinued in 1787, only one Lodge was left in Vienna. *Zur neugekrönten Hoffnung* was from 1785 until his death in 1791 the Lodge to which Mozart belonged. Not very much is known about Mozart's Masonic life[2], but from what is known it becomes clear that he was a dedicated member of his lodge: being initiated as an Apprentice in 1784, Mozart was admitted to the second degree, that of Fellow Craft, one year later and in the same year he became a Master Mason. Frequently Mozart visited other Viennese lodges, and from his two journeys to Prague in 1787 it is known that he moved there in local Masonic circles.

Music played an important part in Masonic ceremonies; almost each occasion was accompanied by appropriate songs or instrumental music. It goes without saying that Mozart contributed to the existing collection of Masonic music with compositions he wrote for different specific occasions. His

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[2] It is not intended here to present a full account of Mozart's Masonic life. The reader who is interested in this subject has a fairly large collection of studies at his disposal. To mention only a few of them:

- Strebel, H., *Der Freimaurer Wolfgang Amadé Mozart*, Stäfa, 1991
- Thomson, K., *The Masonic Thread in Mozart*, London, 1977
- Van den Berk, M., *Die Zauberflöte. Een alchemistische allegorie*, Tilburg, 1994
- Blomhert, B., *Mozart in de tempel. Raakvlakken tussen componist en vrijmetselarij*, Kampen, 1991

Masonic music consists of both vocal and instrumental works, most of them being written between 1785 and 1791, the year of his death (Strebel, 1991:92). To mention some of these works[3]: *Maurerischen Trauermusik* for the death of two Brethren (1785); *Gesellenreise*, supposedly written for the promotion of Leopold Mozart to the second degree in the same year; *Die Maurerfreude* (1785) in honour of Ignaz von Born, the Worshipful Master of the lodge *Zur wahren Eintracht*; *Laut verkünde unsre Freude* (the *Kleine Freimaurer-Kantate*), composed for the consecration of the new Temple of Mozart's Lodge *Zur neugekrönten Hoffnung* in 1791; *Adagio für Klarinette und 3 Bassethörner*, supposedly written as a prelude to, or an interlude in, a Lodge ritual (Strebel, 1991:92-112)[4].

In what might be called the highpoint in Mozart's Masonic oevre: *Die Zauberflöte*, written by Mozart and Brother Emanuel Schikaneder in 1791, Masonic symbolism is abundant. Not only does the libretto contain much references to Masonic ideas and rituals[5], the music is full of them as well. The most clear example can be found at the beginning of Act II, which begins with the march of the priests which is followed by a series of trials that Tamino has to undergo before he can be initiated:

> The *March of the Priests* [...] contains examples of many of the Masonic musical symbols. It is in the key of F major [...]. The opening chords consist of the progression I V_7 VI. The next two bars contain a series of ascending 6-3 chords. [...] The march is immediately followed by the "three knocks" [...]. In the dialogue which follows Sarastro is asked by the priests whether Tamino is

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[3] A complete list of Mozart's Masonic compositions can be found in Strebel, 1991:96.

[4] Apart from specific Masonic compositions, Masonic elements can also be found in many of Mozart's other works. See (Thomson, 1977).

[5] A thorough study of Masonic symbolism, its historical roots and the way it is incorporated in the libretto of *Die Zauberflöte* can be found in Nordmann, E., and G. Schulle, *Die freimaurerische Idee in der Zauberflöte. Ein Spiegelbild antiker Mysterien*, Münster/Hamburg, 1993. Not be missed is Van den Berk's study of *Die Zauberflöte* (Van den Berk, 1994). As Van den Berk makes clear in his book many Viennese lodges in the eighteenth century were inspired by and occupied with things like alchemy, magic and astrology. These lodges, its members were called 'Schwärmer', were involved in a more esoterical interpretation of reaching enlightenment as opposed to the 'Aufgeklärten', as the rationalist Masons were called in those days. Mozart's lodge belonged to the first, the Rosicrucian-affiliated branch of Freemasonry which aimed at 'Erleuchtung' instead of 'Aufklärung'. On this basis Van den Berk analyzes *Die Zauberflöte* which he comes to see as an allegorical allusion to the alchemist's quest for the philosopher's stone.

> worthy to be accepted as a candidate for initiation. [...] The "three knocks" are repeated three times as the priests indicate their acceptance of Tamino as a candidate. The dialogue is followed by a prayer to Isis and Osiris, a hymn in antiphonal style. (Thomson, 1977:160-161)

What is of interest here are the "three knocks". Judging from its occurrence in the score this is an important motif: not only can we find it at the beginning of Act II directly after the march of the priests that accompanies the processional *intrada* of Sarastro and his priests, it also emerges in the middle of the opera's ouverture. In its form this ouverture is a distant relative of the French ouverture, for it begins with a relatively slow and solemn part with the dotted rhythm that is so typical for this genre and this is followed by a faster, bright and cheerful fugato. After 81 bars the fugato comes to a temporary stop, which is followed by the same sequence of B-flat chords as the three knocks in the second Act, and then the fugato continues as if nothing has happened.

The sequence of three distinct knocks can be read as the remains of the beginning of a French ouverture: trumpet-like signals that are played in a pattern of a short upbeat followed by a long downbeat constitute the beginning of a typical French ouverture. Here we see the close resemblance between Mozart's *dreimalige Accord* and Gluck's 'unfinished French ouverture' as we might call it. Differences occur between these two fragments: for example, in Mozart's version only one chord is played (B flat), whereas Gluck modulates from E flat via F to G; Mozart confines himself to just the three knocks, whereas in Gluck's 'ouverture' the knocks are incorporated in a more elaborate structure; Mozart orchestrated the knocks for wind instruments only, but Gluck also has strings and continuo involved. However, notwithstanding these differences, the resemblance is apparent, and especially the moment at which these musical structures appear in both operas is of importance. In *Orfeo ed Euridice* Orpheus must try to gain access to the Underworld if he wants to succeed in getting Euridice back; once he has found her he is neither allowed to look at her nor may he talk to her about this trial, this to Euridice's grief who prefers death above being reunited with a husband who does not show his affection for her. This whole sequence of trials is musically introduced by Gluck's version of the three knocks. *Die Zauberflöte* follows *Orfeo* in this. *Der dreimalige Accord* as it is played at the beginning of the second Act is followed by a series of tests to which Tamino has to submit himself. The first of these tests is that although Tamino may look at his beloved Pamina he is not allowed to speak to her. She is heartbroken that he does not speak to her, expressing her grief in the aria 'Ach, ich fühl's'— only death can

comfort her now ('Fühlst du nicht der Liebe Sehnen so wird Ruhe im Tode sein'/'If you do not feel love's longing only death can give peace').

This leaves us with two scenes from two operas from two stylistical eras which nonetheless show remarkable similarities regarding aspects of both the libretto and the music[6]. We have to leave the libretto for what it is and concentrate on the music, the 'three knocks' so to speak. The question that remains to be answered is that regarding the nature of these knocks in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. An answer can be found by further relating them to the knocks as they occur in *Die Zauberflöte*. According to the different commentaries on the opera that focus on its Masonic aspects, the three knocks in particular should be read as a reference to the opera's Masonic character. Traditionally an assembly of a Lodge is opened with three distinct knocks (Blomhert, 1991:75), but the knocking also plays a part in the ritual that is performed when an apprentice is initiated: 'The initiation to the first degree begins when the candidate is brought before the entrance to the temple and the guard hits the door with the hilt of his sword' (Masonic Beliefs and Practices, 1999). What seems to be at issue in Die Zauberflöte is a combination of both readings of the three knocks: we are witnesses to the opening of a Lodge meeting during which an apprentice will be initiated. Given the fact that the remainder of the opera mainly deals with the trials Tamino is submitted to, and ends in the purification of both himself and Pamina, it seems a correct interpretation to let the reading of the three knocks as the beginning of the initiation rite prevail.

The remarkable similarities between the scores of Gluck and Mozart regarding the three knocks, that is, the rhythmical pattern of a short upbeat followed by a long downbeat, which is derived from the French ouverture, suggests the hypothesis that Gluck may have written his music for *Orfeo ed Euridice* from a background that is related to the Masonic background in which Mozart wrote his music for *Die Zauberflöte*.

Deduction

To test the hypothesis as formulated in the previous chapter we must look whether its logical consequences can be observed within the context of Gluck's score for *Orfeo ed Euridice*. If the hypothesis that the music for this

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[6] And this issue could tempt us to hypothesize about the question whether (and if so, to what extent) Mozart and Schikaneder perhaps might have been using the Gluck and Calzabigi opera as an inspirational source during the genesis of *Die Zauberflöte*. A very intriguing and tempting question which, however, must remain unanswered in this book.

opera is an allusion to Masonry, a hypothesis that might transform *Orfeo ed Euridice* into a Masonic opera, then it should be logical that more instances can be found of musical motives that allow for a Masonic reading, that the score can be gathered among what is called 'Masonic music'.

In her study *The Masonic Thread in Mozart*, Katharine Thomson devotes one chapter entirely to Masonic ideas about music. Thomson lists some characteristics of Masonic music as they can be deduced from a few collections of Masonic songs. These characteristics are commonalities which are shared by most of the songs; of these characteristics it can be said that if a musical composition is designated as being Masonic then it should be possible to recognize some of them within that composition. The opposite is not true: by no means it is obvious for a composition to be of a Masonic nature if it, by any chance, should contain a feature that might be associated with Masonry.

According to Freemasonry, music had to 'spread good thoughts and unity [...]; it should inculcate feelings of humanity, wisdom and patience, virtue and honesty, loyalty to friends, [...] an understanding of freedom' (Thomson, 1977:41). Antiphonal singing was considered the best way 'to spread joy and contentment in society' (ibidem). Besides these general Masonic ideas about music which were formulated by editors of collections of Masonic songs, Thomson deduces some other commonalities of Masonic music on the basis of an analysis of these songs. Characteristics can be classified according to the categories in terms of which the musical sign is described semiotically (see chapter 3): pitch, duration and timbre (no commonalities are mentioned that are related to the category of loudness). Here follows a summary of the commonalities as found by Thomson (ibidem: 41-49 unless stated otherwise).

Pitch:

1. Use of parallel thirds and sixths to express 'shared feelings and harmonious relationships [...] these intervals reflect a state of physical harmony and peace [...]';
2. Use of chords or series of chords on the third and sixth degrees of the scale (III and VI), 'modal' chords which are used to evoke a religious atmosphere because of their association with the accompaniment of plainchant;
3. Use of the suspended cadence: the progression V-VI, which also has a ritual significance;
4. Use of suspensions and slurred notes in pairs refer to the ties of brotherhood;
5. Use of major triads.

Duration:

1. Use of dotted rhythms in different manifestations to promote courage and resolution. A special feature is the threefold knocking on the door of a lodge by a candidate, represented in stylized form;
2. Use of triple time.

Timbre:

1. Use of three-part harmony, usually for male voices;
2. Use of organ or clavier for accompaniment;
3. Use of wind instruments, especially clarinets (ibidem:65), bassoons and horns (ibidem:161).

With regard to the Masonic music of Mozart or more specifically the Masonic element in Mozart's music, three other features can be added to this list:

1. Use of the keys of E flat major and C major (ibidem, 44). Van den Berk (Van den Berk, 1994:333) adds to this that the number of flats also has a special significance: E flat major (3 flats) usually refers to the Master degree, B flat major (2 flats) to the degree of Fellow, F major to Apprenticeship.
2. Use of *Gruppetti*, ornamental turns consisting of four notes connecting two adjacent notes, that is, note above, note itself, note below, note itself (Thomson, 1977:190), to represent Masonic joy (ibidem, 81).
3. Use of the fugato as a symbol for the construction of the temple of wisdom (Van den Berk, 1994:333).

These characteristics of Masonic music are deduced from an analysis of music of which it is more or less evident that it has a Masonic background. The question is whether we are allowed to use this list, or parts of it, to designate a musical composition as being Masonic without having other evidence that could support such reading. To what extent are these characteristics and their combined occurrence exclusively Masonic? Could it not be so that they reflect the aesthetical norms of a particular historical period instead of being specific Masonic allusions? These are questions we are faced with when analyzing music on the basis of a list of characteristics as presented above. A satisfying answer cannot be given. It is true that from the combination of these characteristics a typical kind of music emerges. All we can do is to agree to call this kind of music a music with a Masonic flavor. It remains an agreement, however, an hypothesis which one can either reject or accept for the moment to see what it might yield. Having said this, what remains to be done now in the process of testing the hypothesis as formulated in section 2 of this chapter is searching Gluck's score *Orfeo ed Euridice* for the presence of some of the

above mentioned characteristics of Masonic music. This will be the issue in the last section of this chapter.

Induction

To determine whether the hypothesis that the music that Gluck wrote for *Orfeo ed Euridice* is written against a Masonic background we must now analyze the remainder of the score and search for musical elements that could support a Masonic reading. A list of possible elements we might encounter was given in the previous section. To begin our search we will narrow our focus to the second act, the act of Orpheus' trials in his search for Euridice. This is the scene that directly follows the striking event which initiated semiosis; so if the music contains more Masonic references then it must be possible to find them here. After this exercise the other scenes of the opera will be involved in this reading of the score as well.

The first encounter with potentially Masonic musical material occurs in the deviating French ouverture which also contains the 'three knocks'. After these three knocks have sounded, the orchestra, consisting here of two oboes, two horns, strings and continuo, embarks on a series of descending chords. Towards the end of this sequence the oboes and the two violins play the following series of notes (figure 5.13):

Figure 5.13

Starting in the second bar we find a series of descending parallel thirds and slurred pairs of notes; moreover, the motive as presented in bar three, with an upbeat in bar two, is played three times. The number three, in no matter what manifestation, is of special significance in Masonic symbolism (cf. Nordmann & Schulle, 1993) and as such it also plays a role in Masonic music (cf. Thomson, 1977:43). This sequence is followed by three bars in which the second orchestra, consisting of only strings, harp and cembalo, representing Orpheus who is wandering in the realms of the Underworld, sets the key of C minor which comes with three flats. This key signature of three flats is maintained throughout the complete first part of the second act, although other keys also occur in this section: E flat major, which also comes with three flats,

and F minor, a key that should come with four flats, but instead of changing the key signature Gluck maintains three flats and uses accidentals instead.

Orpheus playing his harp introduces his debate with the Furies. The music that Gluck wrote for the Furies does not reveal other Masonic symbolism than the use of the number three: the Furies sing in a steady 3/4 time and are accompanied by agitated violins and violas which play sextuplets in sixteenth notes; a sextuplet is a combination of two triplets. Triplets also occur in Orpheus' first of three arguments; they are played by the harp of the second orchestra. In the vocal line assigned to Orpheus, some Masonic symbolism can be found: here again slured notes in pairs occur as well as suspended notes. This procedure is repeated in Orpheus' second argument. Here the harp plays groups of three notes, although this time no triplets are involved but eighth notes with rests (figure 5.14):

Figure 5.14

His third argument is succesful: Orpheus is granted access to the Underworld. At this point the second part of the second act begins. It is marked with an instrumental ballet. This ballet reveals some Masonic material in the form of suspensions, slurred pairs of notes and parallel thirds and sixths in the flutes and the violins (figure 5.15):

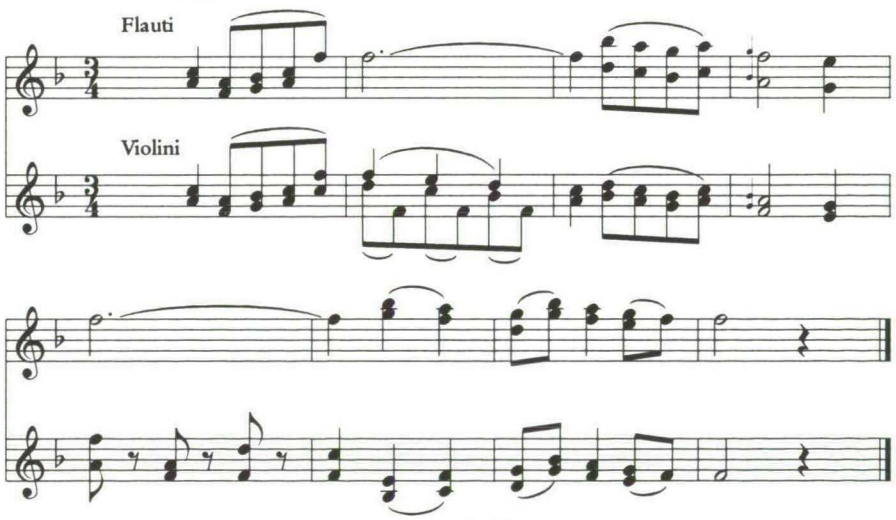

Figure 5.15

After this ballet the musical depiction of the Elysium follows in which Orpheus sings the praises of the 'nuova serena luce', the 'new serene light'. This scene contains some Masonic musical symbolism. In the first place it should be noted that this piece is written in the key of C major as opposed to the part in which Orpheus tried to mollify the Furies, which was for the greater part in the key of C minor. So, in the second act we have travelled from C minor, a key of absolute darkness, to C major, the key that stands for light. Here we have a musical journey that can be considered as a representation of what initiation is about: being in a state of darkness or ignorance one eventually reaches a state of enlightenment. Further Masonic symbolism can be found with regard to the category of timbre: the instruments that are being used. Gluck scores this piece for winds and strings. The score indicates: Traverso solo, Oboe solo, Fagotto solo, Corno solo, Violini, Viola, Violoncello solo, Violoncello e Basso, Cembalo. It is the only place in the score where Gluck explicitly calls for solo instruments. Although only five solo instruments are mentioned in the score, I think a sixth should be added. The second violin is assigned a part which is best done justice when it is played by a solo violin, in which case it would perfectly fit into the subtle and fragile texture in which the other solo instruments are engaged (figure 5.16):

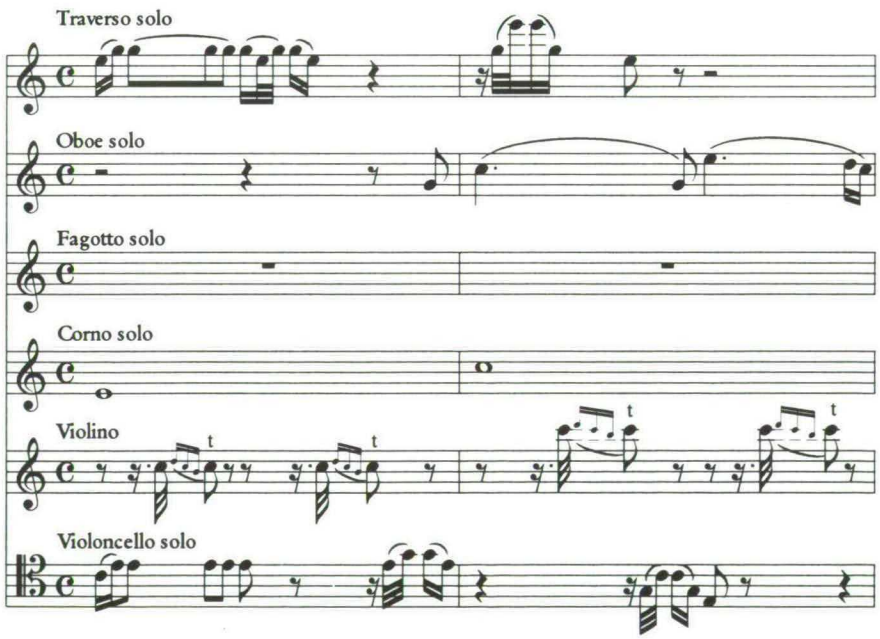

Figure 5.16

With the violin treated as a solo instrument, the musical depiction of the Elysium is scored for six solo instruments, and, for what it may be worth, six is a multiple of three.

Besides the category of timbre, the musical categories of pitch and duration offer some Masonic symbolism as well. Perhaps the best example of both can be found in the violin part. On the level of pitch *Gruppetti* occur. They come in a rhythmical constellation that consists of a short upbeat of one thirtysecond note followed by an eighth note downbeat that is ornamented with a Gruppetto. In other words: the violin plays an ornamented version of the 'knock motive' that initiated semiosis.

The score continues. The chorus in which the Blessed spirits welcome Orpheus to the Elysium ('Vieni regni del riposo'/'Come into the realm of the blessed spirits') is written in the key of F major (one flat) and is in triple time. Its melodic aspect contains both slurred pairs of notes and suspensions, but parallel thirds and sixths can be found as well. A similar chorus in which the Spirits urge Euridice to return to her spouse concludes the second act of *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

At places other than the second act the score for *Orfeo ed Euridice* reveals more use of musical devices that could point towards a Masonic reading of the music that Gluck wrote for the opera. Orpheus' aria *Che farò senza Euridice?* for example, shows some of the same devices we also encountered at various places in the second act: slurred notes in pairs and suspensions. In fact, the greater part of the melodic line that Orpheus sings consists of slurs and suspensions. Together with the key of this aria, it is written in C major, this piece might have special Masonic significance. Without taking the text into account at this moment this combination of musical elements could be read Masonically as a celebration of the experience of brotherhood once having become an initiated Apprentice. A similar reading can be provided for the musical echo in Orpheus' laments in the first act of the opera. These laments are written in triple meter in the key of F major, and both slurred note pairs and suspensions occur frequently. Up to a total of three of these laments can be found in the first act. In all of them the second orchestra echoes Orpheus' melody as in the first lament (figure 5.17).

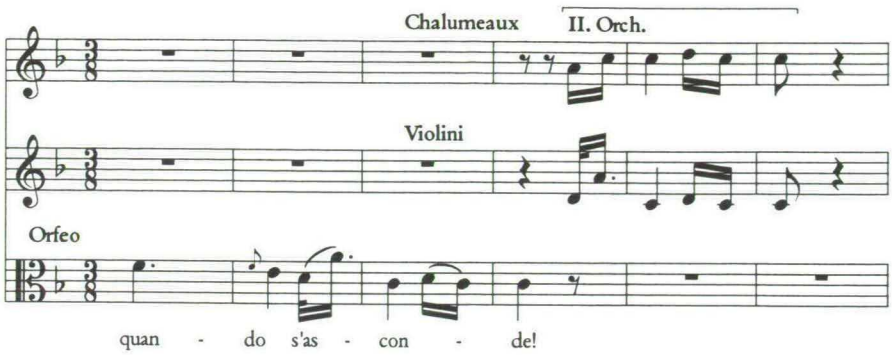

Figure 5.17

What is notable in this lament, and thus in the other laments as well, is the use of the chalumeaux in the second orchestra. The chalumeau (singular form of chalumeaux) originally is the forerunner of the clarinet; it was a popular instrument with a short cylindrical form that was blown through a reed. Originally, for although these instruments became real clarinets through the efforts of Johann Christoph Denner at the end of the seventeenth century, they were still called chalumeaux in Gluck's day (Sachs 1969:467/468). It is therefore likely that when Gluck calls for chalumeaux he means nothing else than clarinets. It happens that clarinets were frequently used instruments in Lodge meetings (Thomson, 1977:65). This attaches particular Masonic significance to the laments in the first act of *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Besides the fact that the chalumeaux are only called for in this first act, they are also used in a very specific way, that is, as part of echoes. But strange echoes! It is expected of echoes that they answer any sound with a literal copy of this original sound. At least, no elements are added. This, however, is what is going in Gluck's echo writing: the chalumeaux add extra notes and thus an extra layer is attached to the echo of Orpheus' melody. Is this perhaps a call to initiation; a call from still distant Brethren?

Having searched for elements in the music that Gluck wrote for *Orfeo ed Euridice* that could be read in a Masonic light, it must be concluded that it is not necessary to reject the hypothesis for the striking event in the score of the 'three knocks': given the fact that consequences of that hypothesis could be observed within the remainder of the score, it is not unlikely that Gluck wrote this opera from a background that was closely related to the ideas of Freemasonry. Whether this could make *Orfeo ed Euridice* into a Masonic opera is the question that will be dealt with in the last chapter of this section with a discussion of the conjoining of libretto and music.

CHAPTER 6

ORFEO ED EURIDICE AS A SYNCRETISM

Introduction

From a semiotic point of view, opera is a syncretism, a sign system that is a compound of the two constituting signs, libretto and music, which enter into a function with each other. Any production of meaning regarding the syncretism is influenced by the signification processes that are involved in these two underlying signs. These signs generate a poetic and a musical interpretant, and it is the interplay of these interpretants that is responsible for the interpretant that is formulated regarding the syncretism. It was considered a necessity to first deal with libretto and music as two autonomous sign systems that semiotically act on their own before their togetherness could be discussed. The previous two chapters followed this procedure; the libretto and the music of *Orfeo ed Euridice* were dealt with as two self-contained semiotic systems. In this final chapter the two interpretants will be put together to formulate an interpretant that may account for the opera as a whole; for the opera as a combination of libretto and music.

Putting two interpretants together is not as easy as it might seem. Two situations can occur: a situation in which two radically differing interpretants have to be assembled to create a compound interpretant, and a situation in which the poetic and musical interpretants fit nicely together. Both situations demand for an application of Peirce's method of science with its inferential procedures of abduction, deduction and induction. However, in these two different situations two different modalities of the method of science are called upon. In the first case the situation of doubt that came into being as a result of the two incompatible interpretants has to be neutralized so that it is possible to create a coherent reading of the opera. In the second case the new interpretant that emerges from the joining of the poetic and musical interpretants takes the form of a compound interpretant, which should represent the opera as a whole. This compound interpretant should be tested through the steps of deduction and induction as if it were a hypothesis. Only once this has been done can a valid compound interpretant be established, and semiosis can come to a rest. Accordingly, this chapter will be organized analogously to Peirce's method of science. First in a description of the abductive stage the interpretants as formulated in the previous two chapters will be joined together, resulting in the formulation of a compound interpretant.

Subsequently this interpretant is tested in the stages of deduction and induction.

Foundations of a compound interpretant

Our search for an interpretant that accounts for the question of what this opera wants to tell us began with an analysis of the two underlying signs of the syncretism, that is, the libretto and the music. First the libretto of Calzabigi was at issue. Analysis of the libretto aimed at the formulation of an interpretant, that is, a construction of a logical and causal story on the basis of the information as presented in the discourse. It was argued that in such a reading process abduction, deduction and induction, the inferential procedures of Peirce's method of science, only come into play when the reader wants to deal with apparent flaws which he is confronted with. These flaws were considered as striking events that call for an explanation—for an hypothesis. Hypothesizing is an integral part of the construction of an interpretant, of reading.

Analysis of the libretto for *Orfeo ed Euridice* began with an observation of the characters that are involved in it. It was found that Euridice plays a crucial role in the libretto: her physical state, her state of being dead versus being not-dead or alive, appeared to determine both the emotional state and—more importantly—the actions of many of the other characters that are involved in the libretto. The prominence of Euridice points to Amor. He is the only character who is not affected by Euridice's physical state, on the contrary: Amor's actions affect Euridice and through her all other characters. Amor is in charge of life and death here, which makes him into a protagonist as well.

After an analysis of the characters we focused on the events these characters were involved in. Starting from the presupposition that events occur within a specific temporal-spatial dimension, our description of them as reported in the libretto distinguished between the aspects of time and place. Analysis of the temporal dimension of the events led to some interesting issues:

1. Because of the absence of any indication of a particular temporal setting of the events, Calzabigi's retelling of the Orpheus myth is for all time instead of being confined to a particular temporal place somewhere in history. Consequently we can say that it also takes place in the present;
2. The libretto lacks any information about a possible evolution of its action through different moments in time, which suggests that all occurs within one immensely magnified moment, an instance of extreme deceleration;

3. As far as the frequency of events is concerned, the complete story of Orpheus and Euridice in the libretto of Calzabigi consists of one and the same story that happens twice.

The last element of our reading of the libretto of *Orfeo ed Euridice* encompassed a discussion of its spatial element. What attracted attention most in the libretto's sequence of scenic settings was the contrastive construction of it. Campania was considered as the neutral level. It is the place where the action begins and where it ends. From the beginning the action moves downwards to the Underworld and from there it goes up to the Elysian Fields. Then the action makes a sudden drop to the Underworld. At the end the neutral level is reached again.

After this description of the libretto as a sign in the light of the different aspects of its characters and events, theory demanded an indication of a possible direction semiosis could take. We asked ourselves the question what significant information with regard to the construction of an interpretant the sign yielded. Two themes could be distinguished, the first of which was 'death vs. life'. This theme was based on what was found in our reading of the libretto, that is, the fact that all action seemed to be inspired by the physical state of Euridice. Amor or 'love' was considered as the second theme of the libretto. He is in control over all the characters because he has the power to affect the physical state of Euridice. But there was more. With regard to the spatial structure of the libretto we found out that a climax in the third act was immediately followed by an anti-climax in the fourth act; this was considered a striking event that called for an hypothesis. The fourth act was also considered striking from a different angle: its relative length, whereas the last act of the libretto was striking because of its shortness. An account for these striking events had to be incorporated in the interpretant.

Having taken the previous two steps of analyzing the libretto and determining a direction semiosis could take, we came to the last step of abduction: finding an answer to the question of what this sign, what this libretto, has to tell us. The key to an interpretation of Calzabigi's libretto was thought to be found in the fourth and fifth scenes because of the attention they attract due to their deviation from the mean scene length. The last scene involved a celebration of Amor and what he stands for: love, loyalty and beauty. Because of the fact that an entire scene is dedicated to Amor's glorification it was concluded that this must be a central thought of the libretto. But the theme of life versus death was also considered as such, so it was necessary to determine the relation between these two main issues of the libretto. It seemed obvious to say that both themes reinforce each other, but if so, then why is it that in the fourth scene the whole sequence of events restarts? It was believed that the

answer had to be sought in the nature of Orpheus' love for Euridice. At first this is a utilitarian kind of love which makes Euridice into Orpheus' muse, he needs her and he loves her only as a necessity for the realization of his own emotional and perhaps artistic fulfilment. This is not the kind of love Amor advocates. He stands for pure and altruistic love. Only when Orpheus recognizes this will Euridice resurrect. This is why in the fourth scene the course of action makes a restart although in a different context: there is recognition, and Orpheus is purified and he reaches a state of enlightenment, which means that he has passed Amor's test and he that can be reunited with Euridice. Consequently it was argued that Calzabigi's version of the story of Orpheus and Euridice should not be looked upon as a story of the magical powers of music, but that his libretto has to be considered as an allegorical description of a rite that initiates a clear vision of the true nature of love.

Consequences for the libretto's theme of the nature of love were looked for in the socio-historical context in which Calzabigi wrote his libretto. It is known that he favored the ideas of Rousseau, Diderot and the Encyclopedists. Therefore, it was argued, we may have to search for ideas on love within the thoughts of these philosophers. For this purpose the inductive stage of inquiry took a closer look at one of Rousseau's important works: *Émile ou de l'éducation*, published in 1762, the year in which *Orfeo ed Euridice* also saw the light of day. In *Émile* Rousseau distinguishes between two kinds of love, amour-de-soi and amour-propre. The first kind of love refers to the passion that guides our self-preservation, whereas the second one ensures that in our interaction with others we are seen as significant individuals. Amour-de-soi is concerned with our physical growth; it comes into being as soon as we are born, whereas amour-propre plays a role as soon as we engage in relations with others. These concepts are applicable to Orpheus. He goes through a rite de passage, a symbolical second birth which leads to enlightenment, that is, Orpheus becomes an initiate to the true nature of amour-prope: he comes to see that human relations are about respecting others in their individuality. The initiation aspect of this hypothetical interpretant was deductively and inductively tested by taking a closer look at commentaries on the source text of Calzabigi's libretto, that is, the myth of Orpheus and Euridice. A study of some of these commentaries led to the conclusion that since its early greek beginnings, a movement has persisted that sees the figure of Orpheus as the embodiment of initiation; the ritual purification of man into maturity which was later dealt with on a more metaphorical level.

The first part of our inquiry into the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* yielded an interpretant that accounted for the libretto. Then a similar exercise had to be undertaken for the music by Gluck. A reading of the score of *Orfeo ed Euridice* taught that although Gluck wrote his music in the mid-eighteenth

century, and notwithstanding the fact that the score shows proto-classical elements, the score should be considered as relic of the stately baroque court opera rather than as a herald of the classical period. This conclusion was drawn on the basis of the observation in the score of a remarkable number of features that seem to be derived from the rich musical resources of the baroque period. These features incude a baroque-flavored symbolic use of keys, tone painting, and the use of baroque dance rhythms. In addition to the dance rhythms, another element was discerned in Gluck's score that supports the view that *Orfeo ed Euridice* could be seen as a postbaroque French court opera. This element is the instrumental introduction as played at the beginning of the second act. The trumpet-like signals, as played here by the orchestra in the typical pattern of a short upbeat followed by a long downbeat, was said to directly originate from the French baroque: it is the beginning of a French ouverture. The problem with this in the context of Gluck's score was twofold. First, ouvertures are normally placed at the beginning of an opera, not at the beginning of the second act as happens in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Secondly, although it seems that a French ouverture is played, what we are dealing with is only the suggestion of such an ouverture: Gluck only adopted its characteristic rhythmical pattern, whereas the other typical elements of the French ouverture have been left out. These observations led to a designation of this musical structure as a striking event that calls for an explanation.

A way out of the situation of doubt that came about because of the striking event, came from an unexpected source: Mozart's music for *Die Zauberflöte*. Both in the ouverture to Mozart's opera and at the beginning of the second act a structure can be heard that shows remarkable similarities with Gluck's French ouverture in *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Mozart's *dreimalige Accord* also suggests the beginning of a French ouverture, but here too only the typical trumpet signals are played. Furthermore, as in Gluck's score the pattern is played thrice, it is placed at the beginning of an act in which in both operas the protagonist is subject to a series of trials. Because of these similarities it was concluded that a key to solving the problem that Gluck created for us might be found by considering his music for *Orfeo ed Euridice* in the light of Mozart's music for *Die Zauberflöte*. Many scholars agree that *Die Zauberflöte* should be read against the background of Freemasonry; both its libretto and the music of this opera are rich in Masonic symbolism. The *dreimalige Accord* is a famous example of this; it is usually interpreted as referring to the knocks with which Lodge meetings are opened, as well as to the knocking that plays a part in the ritual that is performed when an Apprentice is initiated. Given the similarities between the scores of Gluck and Mozart regarding the rhythmical pattern of a short upbeat followed by a long downbeat, which is derived from the French ouverture, it was suggested as an hypothesis that it might be true

that Gluck wrote his music from a background that is related to the Masonic background in which Mozart wrote his music for *Die Zauberflöte.*

If the hypothesis that the music for *Orfeo ed Euridice* should be read against a Masonic background is true, then it should be possible to find in the score more instances of musical motives that allow for a Masonic reading. But what are the characteristics of such motives? In her study *The Masonic Thread* in Mozart Katharine Thomson devotes one chapter entirely to Masonic ideas about music. On the basis of her study a list was drawn of musical elements that are typical for Masonic music. These elements could be clustered according to the musical categories of pitch, duration, and timbre. As a last exercise in establishing an hypothesis for the striking event in Gluck's score an attempt was made to observe the presence of some of this Masonic musical imagery within the context of this score. Different examples could be found of musical elements that go very well with a Masonic reading; as a consequence it was found unnecessary to reject the hypothesis that Gluck wrote his music from a background that is closely related to the ideas of Freemasonry.

With the acceptance of the musical interpretant the analysis of the two signs that together constitute the opera as a sign system comes to an end. We have two interpretants, besides the musical interpretant there is also a poetic interpretant, the interpretant that accounts for the libretto. Now it is time to put the two together.

Towards a compound interpretant

Both the poetic interpretant and the musical interpretant have a major aspect in common: the aspect of initiation. In semiotic terms there is a high degree of congruence between both interpretants. Therefore, without any problems this congruent aspect of the two interpretants can be assembled into one new interpretant, or better: into a part of a new interpretant. This part is the initiation part which both interpretants share. It is now possible to draw the conclusion that the interpretant that is the result of semiosis regarding the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* at least will bear the element of initiation.

Having accounted for one element of the two interpretants, we now must deal with their other elements. Can they be joined as easily as the aspect of initiation or is it necessary to exercise some more semiotic activities on their behalf? The elements which are at issue here are the idea of respecting each other's individuality as a basis for social behavior on the one hand— this was a part of the poetic interpretant— and the reference to Masonic symbolism and thought on the other, as a part of the musical interpretant. At first sight these elements seem incompatible with each other. Are they? Or does a

point exist at which they overlap? If they do, then it should be so that the idea that humanitarian behavior is about respecting others in their individuality is somehow an element of Masonic thought. Whether this is true or not must be examined first before it is possible to present a compound interpretant that is to account for the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice.*

The compound interpretant

To answer the question of whether the idea that humanitarian behavior is about respecting others in their individuality can be considered as an element of Masonic thought, comes down to a description on what Freemasonry is; it involves a journey into the essence of Masonic thought, exploring the depths of its basic assumptions as well as contemplating the full impact of their consequences. Here we arrive at a critical moment in our semiotic analysis of *Orfeo ed Euridice.* Although the course of the process of signification as followed so far inevitably led to this point at which we must answer this question as our analysis evoked it, it remains to be seen whether it is possible—and if so, to what extent—to cope with this question. It is difficult for the non-initiated to fully grasp the significance of the very rich substance of Masonic thought. Having profound knowledge of this is one of the things that Masonic enlightenment is about, a situation that most Masons only reach (if ever) after years of self reflection within the context of the Fraternity. Having said this, the conclusion must be that this section is inevitably of a somewhat superficial level. Because it is not possible to deal with the ins and outs of Masonry from the initiate's point of view, the only way in which this issue can be considered is by studying other sources that take Masonic thought as their topic.

On one of the pages of the website of the 'Order of Freemasons of the Grandlodge of the Netherlands' (http://www.vrijmetselarij.nl) the Declaration of Principles of the Order Freemasons in the Netherlands can be found. These principles are part of the Constitution of the Order, which dates back to 1917; they appear as follows:

> Freemasonry is a movement striving for the development of the human qualities that raise people and mankind, including themselves, to a higher moral and spiritual level.
>
> The order is an independent part of the world-wide brotherhood of freemasons. It aspires to be a center for those who want to practise the art of living.

> Freemasonry believes in the existence of a spiritual and moral order as a propelling power for the progress of mankind.
>
> Freemasonry is based on the recognition of:
> • the intrinsic value of the human personality
> • everyone's right to seek his own truth
> • everyone's moral responsibility for his own actions
> • equality in essence of all people
> • the brotherhood of all people
> • everyone's duty to work at the welfare of the community
>
> The Order tries to attain its objective by organising itself in accordance with the principles described and to inspire society with those principles.
>
> Freemasonry has its own ways of working with symbols and rituals to interpret its ideas and ideals. It also supports everything that could correct and improve moral or spiritual poverty and material misery.
>
> Freemasonry cultivates tolerance and justice, promotes brotherly love, seeks whatever unites people and nations, and tries to remove whatever separates minds and hearts. It strives for unity by making people conscious of their brotherhood.
>
> Freemasons obey the laws of their country.

These basic principles of Masonry show that to achieve spiritual and moral elevation of humanity, a strong appeal is made to the individual's conscience. The Masonic ideal can only be realized by the efforts of the individual Mason; it is the individual who has to decide for himself how he can best contribute to the realization of the Masonic aim. No imposed doctrines stand at the individual's disposal; only by bringing himself up for discussion within his Lodge it is possible to sound out his own habits and beliefs with regard to his functioning as a virtuous human being and to adjust them, if considered necessary.

The declaration of principles of the Dutch Grandlodge shows great respect for the individual. Given the prominent place that is assigned here to the aspect of individuality in the form of recognition of the intrinsic value of the human personality, everyone's right to seek his own truth, and everyone's moral repsonsibility for his own actions, Masonry can be said to embrace the recognition of individuality as one of its highest achievements. Having determined this, it seems no problem to combine the poetic and musical interpretant into one new interpretant. A new interpretant should account for the

two elements our analysis of Calzabigi's libretto and Gluck's music yielded, that is, the element of initiation on the one hand and the element of Masonic thought on the other. This fusion of ideas leads to the interpretant that *Orfeo ed Euridice* has to be considered as an allegorical description of the initiation into the Masonic idea of the recognition of individuality as the basis for human behavior.

Deduction

In the previous section the compound interpretant was formulated that considers *Orfeo ed Euridice* as an allegorical description of the initiation into Masonic thought. Peirce's method of science demands this hypothesis to be tested. This will be done by returning to the opera itself.

Chapter four dealt, among other things, with the duration of the events as presented in the libretto. Two scenes were explicitly mentioned; these were the two scenes that attracted our attention because of the relative length and shortness of the events as described in them. The scene with a relatively lengthy description of an event is the fourth scene, this is the scene in which Orpheus and Euridice have an argument; the scene that does not spend much time on the description of an event is the last scene of the libretto, the scene in which Amor is celebrated. Whereas the analysis of the libretto focused on the fourth scene, the final scene has not yet been under discussion. In this section we will concentrate on the fifth scene of Calzabigi's libretto in search for consequences of the interpretant.

Scene five is a very short scene, not only regarding the brief description of the event that is treated in this scene, but also with regard to its absolute length, that is, the number of lines; in fact, this final scene only consists of a final chorus in rondo-form, a song with three verses and a refrain. But its shortness is not the only aspect that marks this scene. Striking elements are also its key of D major, which is not related to E flat major and C minor, which are the central keys of the opera, as well as its being almost detached from the previous scenes by the insertion of a whole series of instrumental ballets, a suite. This relates the final scene to the first, which was also detached from the opera by the insertion of a kind of ouverture; the striking event in the score. In this way the opera yields the following structure (figure 6.1):

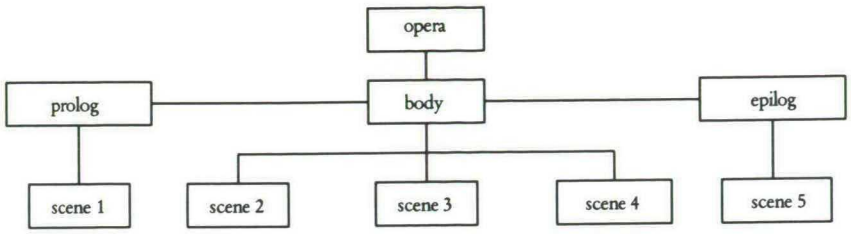

Figure 6.1

This structure is suggested by the specific use of instrumental interruptions which detach both the prolog and the epilog from the opera. We have seen support for this structure earlier, when the spatial element of the libretto was under discussion. The action was situated in three places: Campania, Underworld, and Elysian Fields. It appears that these three places perfectly fit with the structure of the opera as presented in figure 6.2:

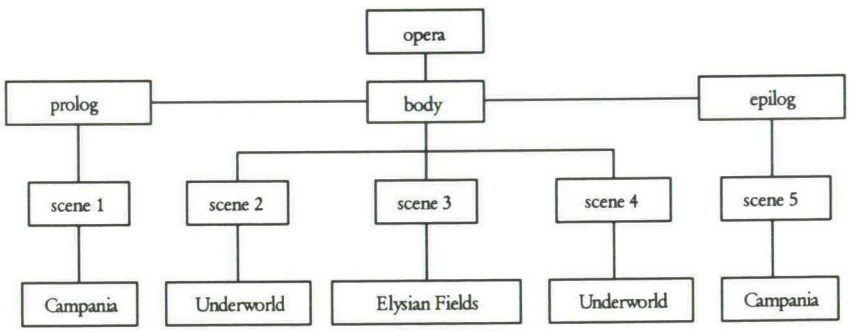

Figure 6.2

This gives a highly symmetrical structure of five scenes with the third scene situated in the Elysian Fields in its center and the prolog and epilog as pillars supporting the main operatic building. Of these pillars it can be said that they are the opera's framework that put the events as told in the opera in a particular context. Especially the final scene contributes to the foundation of this context: it summarizes all that preceded it. This summary is not a summary of what has occurred before our eyes, it is not a summary of the opera as such, but it is concerned with the idea that underlies the opera; we can call it the opera's moral, if you like. This is nothing new. In the first 200 years of the

history of opera almost each opera ended with an enunciation of a moral lesson, a practice that goes back to the days of early opera around 1600, and which finds its way through baroque opera seria to the three operas by Mozart and Da Ponte written in the late eighteenth century. In most cases these lessons are overtly taught by means of a final chorus or a final ensemble. Perhaps partly due to the growing idea of music as an autonomous art form, most nineteenth century operas lack a moral message in this form, although many libretti cannot stop from pointing their readers to a concealed educational lesson.

When a seventeenth or eighteenth century opera ends with a final chorus or a final ensemble it is very likely that a moral lesson is at issue. The idea with regard to *Orfeo ed Euridice* is that the enunciation of this lesson is the main function of the fifth scene. So, if the hypothesis is true that *Orfeo ed Euridice* is an opera which ventilates Masonic ideas, the consequence must be that these ideas are summarized in the final chorus, in the scene which is supposed to deal with the opera's lesson.

Induction

The final scene consists of a chorus in rondo-form with three verses and a refrain. If a final chorus presents the central idea of the opera, then the refrain of such a chorus can be said to summarize this idea in only a few lines.

Trionfi Amore	Triumph to Amor
E il mondo intiero	And let the whole world
Serva all' impero della beltà!	Serve the empire of beauty!

These three lines together form the refrain of the final chorus from *Orfeo ed Euridice*. This refrain unmistakably renders the final chorus the character of a hymn to Amor, a characterization that is heightened by the festive march-like music in D major. But it is not Amor alone who is addressed here: the chorus calls on us, the audience, to serve the empire of beauty. From a Masonic point of view this is more than interesting, as beauty is one of the three main ideals each Mason strives after, the other two being strength and wisdom. These three ideals are essential for the construction of the Temple; a symbolical construction of humanity each Mason has to work on individually (Nordmann & Schulle, 1993:134). The final chorus of *Orfeo ed Euridice* only mentions beauty, and although the music employs some techniques which can be seen as instances of Masonic symbolism (see chapter five), this is not enough to maintain the interpretant that this opera conveys Masonic thought, let

alone that *Orfeo ed Euridice* can be considered as a Masonic opera. On the other hand, our analysis has shown that this adaptation of the Orpheus-myth is more than the myth about the powers of music it is usually held to be. Both Calzabigi's libretto and Gluck's music are concerned with issues that are closely related to ideas of the Enlightenment, and it seems more than sheer coincidence that issues are involved that belong to the heart of Masonic thought. Without designating *Orfeo ed Euridice* as a Masonic opera, the acceptable interpretant can be formulated that the program of this opera is the idea of the recognition of individuality as a prerequisite for social, that is, human behavior.

We have just formulated a plausible interpretant, its plausibility being a result of the fact that it was reached by following the trajectory of Peirce's method of science which involves logical reasoning in formulating and testing an hypothesis. Despite its plausibility, this interpretant leaves us somehow in a state of discomfort—a direct result of the fact that although there is reason to believe that a connection with Masonic thought does exist, the interpretant cannot narrow the gap between the opera and Masonry. The opera itself does not provide us with enough clues that can be used to close this gap. But would it not be nice if this were possible, if we could deliver a Masonic reading of the opera now we are so very close to it? Trying to do so means that we must search for a 'missing link', the famous operatic *deus ex machina* that has been employed in many early operas to provide for a happy ending after all. Perhaps this missing link can be found by taking into account the historical context in which *Orfeo ed Euridice* was written, that is, by taking a closer look at the historical environment in which Clazabigi and Gluck wrote their opera. Could it be that others were involved in the genesis of their reform-opera, and if so, how, and from what background did they influence its makers?

When *Orfeo ed Euridice* was first performed in 1762 on the occasion of the name day of emperor Franz I, the Viennese court was oriented towards France. Cultural politics was strongly French-flavored: the court of Maria Theresia and the educated upper classes proclaimed French their official language, and the theaters embraced the francophile atmosphere by putting mainly French theater on stage. An important impulse to this was given in 1736 when Maria Theresia married the heir to the Grand Duchy of Lorraine, Francis, who became emperor of Austria in 1745. Francis brought several fellow Lothringians with him when he moved to Vienna; among them were painters, architects, garden architects, mathematicians, physicists, natural scientists and other artists and intellectuals who appeared to have had a wide-ranging impact on both Vienna the capital and the Viennese court (Brown, 1991:30-34). In this way French elements gradually found their way into the theater, but the real boost for the French theater in Vienna came in 1753,

when Count Kaunitz became Chancellor of State. Although Kaunitz was never directly responsible for theatrical affairs, his position allowed him control over all of its aspects. From 1750 to 1752 Kaunitz had lived in Paris as the Austrian Ambassador, and during this period he had made many contacts which proved to be useful to the French theatre in Vienna. It is very likely that it was in Paris where Kaunitz came into contact with Calzabigi. Apparantly a close friendship existed between the two men who confided in one another, judging from a letter Calzabigi wrote to Kaunitz in 1767. In this letter Calzabigi shows his aversion to the Metastasian type of opera seria, Metastasio was the Viennese court poet in those days, and its singers; he successfully asked for Kaunitz' aid in obtaining a suitable cast for *Alceste*, an opera by Gluck and himself (ibidem:46).

Kaunitz succeeded in creating a circle of kindred spirits around him, people who took an interest in French theater and who rejected opera seria in favor of a new type of opera which had to be modeled after French patterns. Perhaps his best move in this was his successful attempt in 1750 to get Count Durazzo to Vienna as Ambassador for Genoa. Durazzo, who already held an important position in Vienna's social life after he married Countess Ungnad (Einstein, 1972:40), became in 1753 the assistant to Count Franz Esterházy, who at that time was in charge of the imperial theaters. When Esterházy retired in 1754, Durazzo took his position and held it for the next ten years. It was Durazzo who got Gluck a position at the court, first as musical arranger of *operás comiques* that were imported from Paris and which had to be adapted to the Viennese taste, and later as bandmaster of the imperial court (De Palézieux, 1988:45-48). Durazzo was the driving force behind the French theater in Vienna.

There is something that creates a link between Durazzo, Kaunitz and Franz I: the three of them were initiated as Masons. Franz I was initiated in 1731 in The Hague, and he became a Master in the same year. He was one of Vienna's first Masons, and during his reign he put effort in the protection of the Viennese Lodges that were under serious attack by different papal bulls. Durazzo and his patron Kaunitz were Masons as well; both were members of the Lodge *Zur wahren Eintracht* (Brown, 1991:52). Now it would be ideal if there was any proof of Gluck and Calzabigi being Masons as well. However, I have found no such proof. But as Bruce Brown argues, 'Viennese lodges included as members a great many of the nobles and foreign ambassadors who made up the French theater's most faithful audience. And there seem to have been Freemasons among the theatrical personnel, as well' (ibidem:34). Could it be that the creators of *Orfeo ed Euridice* were somehow also related to the Viennese Lodges? Maybe, maybe not. But Kaunitz and Durazzo were Masons; the emperor was a dedicated Mason; Masonry was popular among the nobil-

ity— it seems likely that Calzabigi and Gluck, working in this environment that fostered Masonic ideals, must have been somehow affected by the Masonic background of their protectors and the social environment in which *Orfeo ed Euridice* was created. Consequently, it is not completely unrealistic to incorporate a Masonic aspect in our reading of *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Without calling *Orfeo ed Euridice* a Masonic opera, we can say that Calzabigi and Gluck created an opera which can be seen as an allegorical description of an initiation into the (Masonic) idea of the recognition of individuality as the basis, as a prerequisite for social, that is, human behavior.

CHAPTER 7

A SEMIOTICS OF OPERA

Introduction

It has been the aim of the present study to deal with the central question as presented in the first chapter: '*On the basis of Peircean semiotics, what can be learned about signification regarding opera as the copresence of libretto and music?*'. The central question of this book was founded on two premises. In the first place it was stated that the theatrical aspect of opera would not be under discussion, limiting the object of this study to opera, here defined as the copresence of libretto and music. The second premise was inspired by the ongoing discussion in musicology about the question of whether music has meaning or not. It was argued that the modernist approach to this problem which considers music and meaning as independent autonomous concepts has not yet offered a satisfactory way out of the problem; therefore a different approach was suggested in which music and meaning were considered as mental concepts, as human constructs that are interdependent as far as signification is considered. This last premise paved the way for a semiotic approach to signification in opera, the core activity of semiotics being the description and analysis of signification processes; it describes the process of interpretation instead of the interpretation itself.

In order to meet the goal as put forward in the first chapter, different steps were undertaken that were considered necessary for a proper treatment of the subject. The specific methodology of the semiotic approach followed here called for a discussion of the fundamentals of the semiotics of C. S. Peirce. Here a definition of semiotic concepts as 'sign', 'object' and 'interpretant' was given, and Peirce's method of science was presented, as a conscious method of inquiry that aims at a proper explanation for striking events by means of different types of reasoning: abduction, in which the striking event is scrutinized and an hypothesis is formulated; deduction, in which logical consequences of this hypothesis are drawn; and induction, the final stage of inquiry in which an attempt is made to observe these consequences. In the discussion of Peirce's semiotics many terms and ideas were introduced. To advance understanding of these theoretical constructs and to show how they might work in a concrete situation the second chapter concluded with a semiotic analysis of one of Chopin's nocturnes.

After the presentation of the theoretical foundation of this study, opera had to be dealt with as a semiotic phenomenon. It was argued that it was the reader's task to create his own rendering of the dramatic world as presented in

the operatic sign. The question as to what such a process of signification might look like called for a semiotic theory of signification in opera. The presupposition of this theory was that semiosis is an interactive process in which both the sign and the sign-user perform specific tasks. A further description of these tasks was the subject of chapter three.

In the first three chapters of this study the way was paved for a semiotic theory of opera. In the second part, chapters four to six, the opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* was analyzed according to these theoretical considerations. In this final chapter an attempt is made to formulate such a Peirce-based semiotic theory of opera. It is called a semiotics of opera— the theory as it is presented by no means pretends to be the ultimate exhausting and all-compassing semiotic theory of opera; its pretensions are far more modest in that its only aim is to formulate some ideas which might serve as a basis for the foundation of a theoretical framework for further research into opera as a semiotic phenomenon.

Experiencing opera

Opera can be experienced in different ways. We can go to the theater and attend a staged live performance with real singers and a real orchestra. If we do not want to take all the trouble that is involved in embarking on such a social event, we can choose to stay at home and watch the opera that is broadcast that evening, or we can put a compact disc in our stereo and listen to our favorite recording of our favorite opera. These are the most common ways of experiencing opera, and they involve different media that involve different sensations: the medium of music which makes it possible that we can listen to opera appeals to the sense of hearing, whereas staging, the aspect of opera by virtue of which we can watch operas either on television or in real life, also appeals to the sense of sight. Attendance figures of live performances of staged operas support the idea that this is perhaps the most popular way of experiencing opera; it seems as if contact between the creators of an opera, the opera itself, and its audience is mainly established when attending a theatrical live performance of opera. If this observation is true then it must be concluded that staging is an indispensible feature of the genre and that it should be incorporated into a study that is about signification in opera. Staging is an integral part of the theatrical experience which involves qualities such as the quality of attending the theater as a social event (for example, dress codes, behavioral codes), architectural qualities of the theater building (for example, acoustics, seating, view on stage), and qualities that are related to the staging of opera (for example, musical and acting qualities of the performers, gestures, the use of costumes and decors, lighting). All these qualities determine the nature of the operatic sign in the situation of a staged performance of opera, which implies that they are of vital importance in semio-

sis. A semiotic approach of experiencing opera in the theater should account for these different qualities and how they relate to the process of signification. Despite its importance, however, this study does not take the semiotic aspects of experiencing opera in a theatrical performance into account. As was argued in chapter three, staging, which is one of the constituents of theatrical experience, is not considered an essential element of the operatic sign; the operatic sign is the copresence of libretto and music, and staging should be considered an interpretant of this composite sign instead of being a part of it.

In this study, opera as a semiotic phenomenon is defined as the conjoining and copresence of libretto and music. It is of a predominantly narrative nature, that is, the operatic sign deals with characters and events, the arrangement of which is called the plot. It is our task to process this information in such a way that at the end we can combine the scattered bits of information so that it gives us a coherent interpretant.

Constructing an interpretant depends on the contribution made by the libretto and the music to the realization of the operatic sign. When we say that opera is a narrative art form we are also saying that libretto and music are primarily narrative sign systems, or at least that they have a strong narrative character. Opera can only exist by virtue of the togetherness of a libretto and a musical score; consequently for any quality that is assigned to opera, it should be possible to trace back its origins to the constituting sign systems. A consequence of acknowledging the predominantly narrative character of the libretto and operatic music would be that both lend themselves for being described in terms of events and characters; the elements which make a discourse into a narrative discourse. With regard to the libretto, this seems no problem at all. The libretto is a literary genre which provides the reader with more or less concrete information about the narrative categories 'events' and 'characters'; a libretto is a real-time report of a series of events with characters involved in it either actively or passively. Although it seems impossible, or at least difficult, music can be described in terms of events and actors as well. A musical element that follows a certain trajectory, for example, it modulates, or it is mirrored or played in retrograde motion: such a trajectory is nothing more than a musical event in which a particular musical element is assigned the role of actor. Musical events also have a temporal-spatial dimension. Music by definition moves in time and space, it is moving sound that creates its own soundspace. If music moves within the context of an opera then we are not dealing with physical movement in the first place— this is what you might think when considering musical motion: music can literally move people, of which dancing is a good example— but with a logical-causal movement in which the musical actor moves from one point to another, thereby being subject to alterations. Moving from a to b and undergoing changes during this journey is what defines a narrative event. In this way the musical sign realizes its contribution to the narrativity of the opera. Operatic

music should then be defined as predominantly narrative music that contributes significantly to the realization of the narrativity of the opera. If operatic music might evoke a physical energetic interpretant this should be considered an incidental circumstance[1].

Music is an aural art form that is intended to be listened to. While listening we create an image of the music. From its very beginning the listener is carried on, and if we want to experience, understand or just follow the music the only thing we can do is surrender to the development of the music from the beginning to the end. The motion of the music creates its own time and space. Musical time is not only created by the specific employment of variables that belong to the category of duration, but also by, for example, repetitions which decelerate or even stop the time; time can also be accelerated by shorter note values or shortened themes and motives; ellipses can be created by leaving out musical material. Musical motion also creates its own space; this space is the context within which the music can realize its narrativity, it is the bandwidth within which the musical narrative can develop. An example of how operatic music can create its own space can be found in 'Che puro ciel'. The specific application of variables of the musical categories creates an Elysian atmosphere— a heavenly space. Within this space the music tells the story of Orpheus who has to choose between heaven and earth: on one hand he is exalted about his Elysian experience, on the other he has this strong earthly desire to be reunited with Euridice and to continue their lives in the world of the living.

Listening to music is about being carried away by the events in which the musical actors participate; it is about following the musical narration. This listening, this being carried away, is like embarking on a dark ride. You do not know what to expect, and unexpected twists cannot be lived through again at that moment, for things keep going on, it is not possible to escape from the movement without disturbing the experience. During this process the listener is assimilated into the trajectory the music follows; he gathers information that the musical sign supplies, information which is brought together so that meaningful units arise which can play a role in the construction of a narrative interpretant. These units are combinations of actualized variables of the musical categories pitch, duration, loudness and timbre, units which carry a high potential of meaning: the actors and events of the musical discourse. The creation of these meaningful units is a process in which the listener has to decide how to relate all the data he gathered to come to a satisfactory result; at the same time the hypothetical result of this exercise is submitted to a different process that is to deter-

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[1] The ballets in *Orfeo ed Euridice* should also be considered in this light. Although they accompany and direct the choir's dance, these ballets are not for their own sake, but are integrated in the story as narratives: their performers are involved in events that are presented by means of gestures instead of speech and song.

mine the credibility, the validity and the legitimy of this hypothesis— indeed, it is tested through abduction, deduction and induction. But in the listening process all this happens at the subconscious or even at the unconscious level— in terms of Peirce's semiotic theory: emotional interpretants are formed which might grow into energetic interpretants, but a logical interpretant is not yet under consideration. At this subconscious level it is not really possible to deal with striking events adequately, which is also a consequence of the fact that the listener is assimilated into the movement of the music which cannot be interrupted, he becomes one with the music. Dealing with striking events and formulating a logical interpretant requires taking the written score into account once the musical movement has finished and analyzing the score by reading it and processing it with the help of Peirce's method of science. At that moment the aural semiosis is transformed into a visual semiosis; a semiotics of reading that aims at the construction of an interpretant, just as in case of semiosis of the libretto.

Reading a libretto is, like listening to music, aimed at the construction of an interpretant. The reader embarks on such a process from the presupposition that all information the discourse presents is significantly related. This presupposition enables us to form an interpretant on the basis of what the text presents. When taking a closer look at the reading process it appears that this visual processing of information consists of numerous 'mini-semiosises'. What happens? When reading we aim at constructing an interpretant that is a rendering of the dramatic world of the libretto. A dramatic world is based on the relations between the different characters, between the characters and the events they participate in, and between the different events. Characters can be known by taking into account their traits and their physical appearance. As easy as this might seem, combining such information into a significant whole is not an easy task; it is a complex process during which the reader has to take all kinds of decisions, and at the same time the hypothetical result of this exercise is tested through abduction, deduction and induction. In this way small significant units are created that come to play a role in semiosis. Constructing these small units is a continuous process to which the reader exposes himself in the dialog with a libretto. Peirce's method of science is more explicitly followed when apparent flaws are detected. These flaws are striking events that call for an explanation, the key to which is to be found in the sign itself. Problem solving forms an integral part of semiosis.

The key to a solution for the problem the sign presents us with is to be found in the sign itself. It is concealed in the sign, but it depends on the abilities and limitations of the sign-user whether and to what extent this key can be retrieved. Signs consist of three different parts that serve this purpose: the representamen, that is the dimension of the sign which renders it perceivable; the immediate object; and the immediate interpretant. The immediate object is a conceptual image of the dynamical object (Van Wolde, 1989:27), the object of the sign. The immediate interpretant, that which is 'ordinarily called the meaning of the sign' (CP 4.536, 1905), is 'the bare grasping of the semantic content of a sign' (Van Wolde, 1989:27). Peirce illustrates both dimensions of the sign in a letter to William James:

> For instance, suppose I awake in the morning before my wife, and that afterwards she wakes up and inquires, "What sort of a day is it?" This is a sign, whose Object, as expressed, is the weather at that time, but whose Dynamical Object is the impression which I have presumably derived from peeping between the window-curtains. Whose Interpretant, as expressed, is the quality of the weather, but whose Dynamical Interpretant is my answering her question. But beyond that, there is a third Interpretant. The Immediate Interpretant is what the Question expresses, all that it immediately expresses [...]. I reply, let us suppose: "It is a stormy day." Here is another sign. Its Immediate Object is the notion of the present weather so far as this is common to her mind and mine— not the character of it, but the identity of it. The Dynamical Object is the identity of the actual or Real meteorological conditions at the moment. The Immediate Interpretant is the schema in her imagination, i.e. the vague Image or what there is in common to the different Images of a stormy day. [...] (CP 8.314, 1909)

Both the immediate object and the immediate interpretant are concealed in the sign, the constitution of which is at the same time to a great extent subject to both dimensions. The sign is the result of a process. In this process, the dynamical object reveals some of its identity (but not its entire character, its being) by projecting an image of itself on the sign. This image can be either iconic, indexical or symbolic in nature. In its turn, the immediate object appoints the nature of the immediate interpretant, that is, to facilitate semiosis the immediate object determines what schemata can be actualized in order to facilitate the determination of the character of the dynamical object. The immediate interpretant strongly influences the nature of the dynamical interpretant, which can be either

emotional, energetic or logical in nature. On the basis of these considerations the triadic model of semiosis can be refined as follows (figure 7.1):

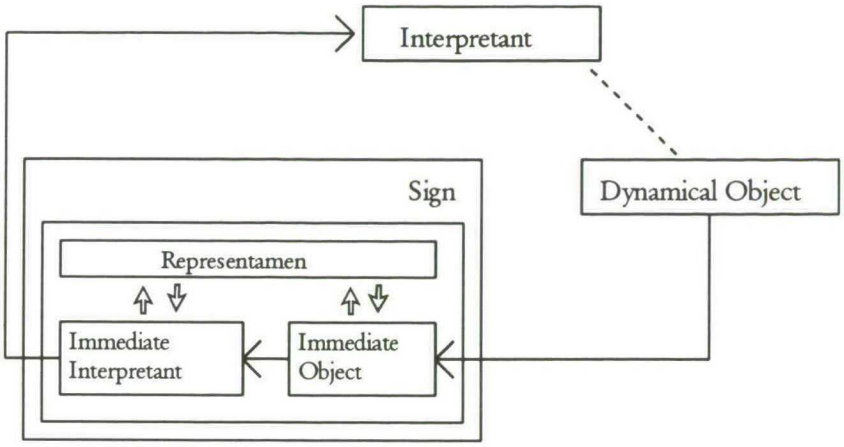

Figure 7.1

According to this model, the sign is the place where reality manifests itself in a derived form in such a way that it allows for perception and that it generates and evokes a particular interpretant. It consists of a representamen, which allows us to perceive the sign at all; it is the sign's formal dimension that is at the same time syntactic as it organizes and structures the immediate object and the immediate interpretant (in figure 7.1 this is expressed by the reciprocal arrows). Of the immediate object it can be said that it forms the sign's semantic dimension or isotopy, 'a main or fundamental or deep or source event; it is the difference with which all other semiotic processes in one discourse are connected: it is their "common-place"' (Van Baest & Speelman, 1999:261). The immediate interpretant constitutes the pragmatic dimension of the sign. At the same time it is the connection between sign and interpretant, in the same way as the immediate object is the connection between the sign and the dynamical object. Now we can say that the pragmatic dimension of the sign is determined by, or grows out of, its semantic dimension, which in turn needs the syntactic dimension as a means of self-realization. The semantic dimension of the sign is determined by the dynamical object; it functions as a framework for signification by allowing some interpretations but prohibiting others. By doing so, this can be considered a last and almost desperate attempt of the object to establish a direct connection with the interpretant. Although it is a very powerful attempt, the dynamical object is doomed to fail this purpose: never shall it succeed in completely determining the meaning of a sign. Meaning is the result of interpretation, which is subject to the sign-user's habits and beliefs. In fact, although the framework as

provided by the dynamical object partly exists outside the sign-user in the form of the immediate object, in the end it depends on the sign-user what part of this framework is being actualized, if noticed at all.

The three dimensions of the sign, that is, the syntactic, the semantic and the pragmatic, are so closely interwoven that they cannot be separated: the semantic dimension needs the sign's syntactic organization as a vehicle to expose itself, whereas the syntactic dimension of the sign needs the semantic dimension as its *raison d'etre*, and the semantic determines the pragmatic. The syntactic dimension of the sign, that dimension of the sign which renders it perceivable and which organizes its other aspects, coincides with the representamen; its semantic dimension bears on the relation of this sign with the dynamical object, the element of reality it is determined by and which on its turn determines the pragmatic dimension of the sign, that is, how people react towards this sign in terms of their behavior.

On the nature of the object

The nature of the object of the operatic sign, of any sign, differs from sign to sign and from interpreter to interpreter. However, there is reason to believe that all these different objects can be reduced to a common denominator. This has to do with the human element that is so fundamental to all semiotic activities. Let me try to explain this by taking into account the operatic sign.

An opera is a sign that is made by a librettist and a composer, by human beings, in a particular social-historical context. The sign is a reaction to this existence; it enters into a dialog with its historical context by bringing the norms, values, habits, that is, the ideology of that society, up for discussion. Having knowledge of an opera's historical context is not necessary for signification, but because this context is innate to the sign it means that we cannot dispose of it either— a contemporary encounter with an eighteenth-century opera is also an encounter with the historical context in which that opera was created. Explicitly incorporating this context in semiosis can clarify matters, or it can shed new light on matters as it did, for example, in our analysis of *Orfeo ed Euridice*.

What is indicated with the term 'historical context' of an opera is an interpretant of another semiosis. In this sub-semiosis the social system of a particular period in time functions as a sign that is indexically related to the ideology of that society, ideology defined here as the total of norms and values. The historical context is the interpretant of this sub-semiosis. At the same time this interpretant functions as a sign in a second semiosis. At this point sign and interpretant are no longer identical: in this second semiosis the historical context becomes the sign that is colored by the ideologies of the librettist and the com-

poser. This addition is an extension of the historical context as a sign. We have a new sign here that leads to a second interpretant: the opera as the assimilation of different ideologies, these ideologies belonging to the dynamical object which is indexically related to the sign. Traces of this object can be found in the object of the semiosis that the opera as a sign initiates; this is the semiosis in which a reader forms an interpretant that accounts for the opera. The interpretant that the reader formulates represents the object to which the opera as a sign refers. Not only can this involve a reconstruction of the historical context, what is at issue as well is the ideology of the sign-user. His values, his ideology, constitute the sign, together with the ideologies that are the object of the historical context. From this point of view the operatic sign is indexically related to its object (figure 7.2).

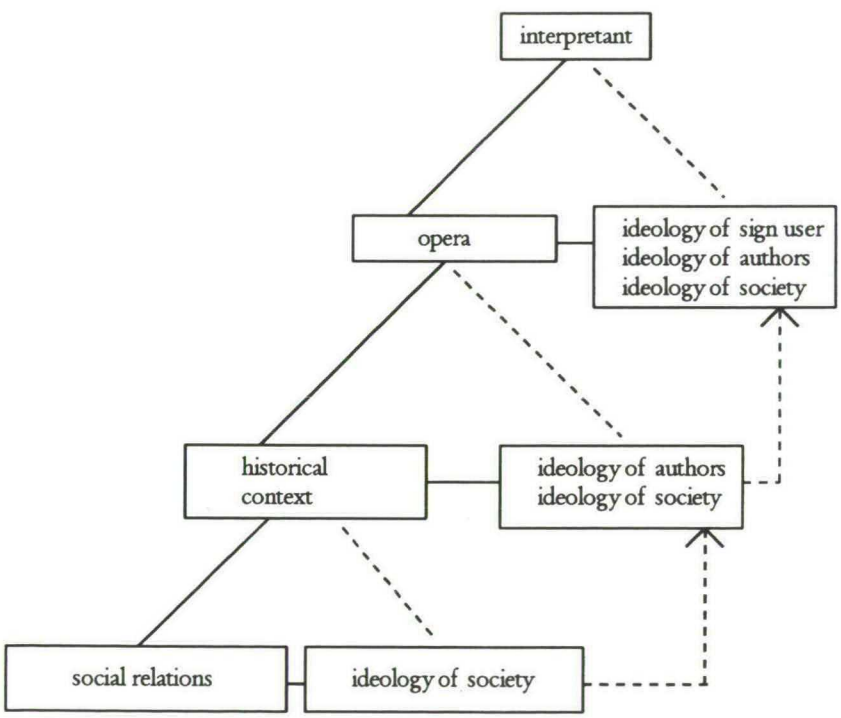

Figure 7.2

In this way opera is an amalgam of different ideologies that enter into a dialog with each other because of their joining within the context of an operatic sign. The dialogue of these ideologies is what opera has in common with all forms of cultural production. Bakthin described this idea. He says that all cultural production is part of a social dialog that takes place at a particular moment in his-

tory. The social and historical context in which a cultural product has its origin is the soil for the production of culture. Because in this way both the formal and the substantial aspect of all cultural signs is firmly rooted in a historical context, all cultural signs are actual signs. This is especially true with regard to opera. As an introduction to the broadcast on German television of a Mozart-Da Ponte cycle that was directed by Peter Sellars, Ivan Nagel wrote:

> Mozart hat eine ganze reihe von Opern mit alten Sujets geschrieben [...]. Aber die drei Opern, deren Texte von da Ponte stammen, eben »Figaros Hochzeit«, »Don Giovanni«, »Così fan tutte«— sie sind nicht historisch, sie spielen in Mozarts eigener Zeit. Für Mozart waren sie nicht Altwiener Rokokostücke, sondern Gegenwartsstücke. [...] Dem Regisseur Peter Sellars geht es nicht darum, mit der sogenannten "Aktualisierung" von Mozarts drei Stücken aufzufallen— sondern darum, die Aktualität von Mozarts drei Gegenwartsstücken wiederzugewinnen. (Nagel, 1996:126)

The sociologist Alfred Schutz said the same thing about Mozart's operas: 'Mozart's dramatic art is a representation of the basic structure of the social world' (Schutz, quoted in Chanan, 1994:41). Mozart's and other's operas, and in general all cultural products, are actual products, they are signs that enter into a dialog with the real world. This is not a well-defined whole, but it is the sum of different ideologies or belief systems from different social strata. These social strata have their own language by which they manifest themselves in the cultural products of their time. In the opera the different social strata and their ideologies are embodied in the plot, in the events and characters that are the constituting elements of the narration, both in the libretto and in the music.

Conclusion

When we are involved in semiosis this does not imply more than that we are trying to deal with the signs we are confronted with in a meaningful way. These signs are elements from the perceptible world, in fact, these signs *are* the perceptible world. This is the presupposition of semiotics, that we cannot know the world directly, but only through the mediation of signs. Signs constitute a fictitious world; this is the world in which we live, it is our existence. Dealing with signs is about assigning meaning to these signs, it is an attempt to make sense of the world we live in. The process along which we try to achieve this is called semiosis, and a semiotic theory describes this process. When we arrange our world we are constructing a whole, the parts of which make a preferably coherent, logical and causal union. From the relations these parts enter into, they derive their identities. This applies to all participants in the semiotic play; it applies

both to what is usually indicated with the term 'object', that is, that which is the object of semiosis, and to what is commonly called 'subject', the signifying individual. In semiosis these subjects and objects are so closely related to one another that it is hard to separate them. A sign can only be delivered from its status as a qualisign if and only if it is actualized as a sinsign, an act that can only be performed by the human being who is arranging his world. Signs cannot exist without human beings— the object cannot do without the subject. But as actualizing potential signs as sinsigns is an act that is performed by a human being to arrange his world, we can also say the opposite: the subject cannot do without the object— in fact, the subject is always part of the object: they coincide. Only by dealing with signs are we able to assign meaning to the phenomena we encounter in our daily life. Only by assigning meaning and thus by dealing with signs are we able to create a meaningful place for ourselves within that world. Semiotics can help us to explore, to describe and to explain this process of signification; it provides us with a framework by means of which we can describe how we deal with signs that we encounter in daily life, how we encounter the phemonena that constitute our existence— it is about us as signifying and significant human beings, about how we take our identities by dealing with signs.

SUMMARY (IN DUTCH)

SEMIOTIEK VAN DE OPERA

De centrale vraag van deze studie luidt: 'Wat kunnen we op basis van de semiotiek van C. S. Peirce te weten komen over betekenisvorming in verband met opera als de gelijktijdige aanwezigheid van libretto en muziek?'; het traject dat tot deze vraag heeft geleid wordt beschreven in het eerste hoofdstuk. Deze onderzoeksvraag stoelt op twee vooronderstellingen. Op de eerste plaats wordt het verschijnsel 'opera' afgebakend tot het samengaan van libretto en muziek; het aspect van de enscenering wordt hierbij buiten beschouwing gelaten. De tweede vooronderstelling is geïnspireerd op de musicologische discussie omtrent het probleem van muziek en betekenis. Een modernistische benadering van deze problematiek beschouwt muziek en betekenis als twee onafhankelijke autonome concepten; deze benadering is er niet in geslaagd een uitweg te bieden uit de impasse die zij zelf heeft opgeroepen. Die uitweg kan wel komen van een benadering die muziek en betekenis beschouwt als mentale concepten, als menselijke constructies die zeker vanuit het oogpunt van betekenisvorming nauw met elkaar verbonden zijn. Zo'n invalshoek biedt de semiotiek. Een semiotische benadering van betekenisvorming in verband met opera richt zich op de beschrijving en analyse van het betekenisvormingsproces; zij is niet zozeer gericht op het beschrijven van de interpretatie alswel op een beschrijving van het interpretatieproces.

De semiotiek van Charles Sanders Peirce, de theoretische basis van deze studie, wordt beschreven in het tweede hoofdstuk. Semiotische concepten als 'teken', 'object' en 'interpretant' worden in dit hoofdstuk gedefinieerd. Ook wordt hier de wetenschappelijke methode van Peirce geïntroduceerd. Dit is een onderzoeksmethode die zich richt op het formuleren van een verklaring voor verrassende gebeurtenissen door middel van drie verschillende redeneertypen: abductie, hierin wordt het verrassende bevraagd en wordt een hypothese geformuleerd; deductie, het formuleren van logische consequenties van die hypothese; en inductie, de laatste fase van onderzoek waarin wordt geprobeerd deze consequenties te observeren binnen de context van het teken. Een semiotische analyse van een nocturne van Chopin, ter illustratie van de wijze waarop de ideeën en terminologie van Peirce in de praktijk zouden kunnen functioneren, besluit het tweede hoofdstuk.

Hoofdstuk drie gaat in op de semiotische aspecten van opera. Het is de taak van de lezer van opera als het samengaan van libretto en muziek om

zich een beeld te schetsen van de dramatische wereld zoals die in het teken wordt gepresenteerd. De vraag naar de aard van zo'n betekenisvormingsproces vraagt om een semiotische theorie omtrent betekenisvorming in verband met opera. Deze theorie heeft als vooronderstelling dat semiosis een interactief proces is waarbij zowel het teken als de tekengebruiker specifieke taken verrichten.

Opera is een syncretisch teken. Dat wil zeggen dat het een samengaan is van andere tekens, in dit geval libretto en muziek. Daar deze ingebedde tekens op hun eigen wijze bijdragen aan het betekenisvormingsprocess, vraagt het analyseren van een syncretisch teken om een analyse van de ingebedde tekens. Voor een syncretisch teken geldt dat deze ingebedde tekens gelijkwaardig zijn; met betrekking tot opera betekent dat dat het primaat ligt noch bij het libretto, noch bij de muziek. Het is bovendien zo dat in verband met de inferentiële procedures abductie, deductie en inductie geldt dat zij op zowel libretto als muziek van toepassing zijn. Toch is het niet helemaal zo dat er geen verschillen zouden zijn tussen libretto en muziek. De verschillen die er zijn hebben betrekking op het waarneembare aspect van het teken, het representamen. Het representamen maakt het mogelijk dat wij onderscheid kunnen maken tussen een literair teken als het libretto en een muzikaal teken. Het bestaan van deze verschillen vraagt om een afzonderlijke beschrijving van libretto en muziek voordat hun samengaan binnen de opera als syncretisch teken beschreven kan worden.

Het libretto is de bron van waaruit de opera ontspringt. Een libretto is een literair teken; het is verbonden met een semiotiek van het lezen waarin de lezer de taak heeft om een interpretant te creëren die de dramatische wereld van het libretto beschrijft. Zo'n interpretant is gebaseerd op de personages en de temporeel-spatiale volgorde van de gebeurtenissen zoals dat gepresenteerd wordt in het libretto. Personages en gebeurtenissen vormen samen de handeling van het libretto, het aspect waarop de lezer zich met name richt bij de constructie van een interpretant. Dat is niet alleen zo bij semiosis in verband met het libretto, het heeft ook betrekking op het muzikale betekenisvormingsproces. Hoewel muziek bedoeld is om naar te luisteren, is iedere analyse van muziek en muzikale betekenisvormingprocessen afhankelijk van de partituur. Net zoals het geval is bij het libretto richt zich de muzikale interpretant in verband met opera op handeling, op de beschrijving van muzikale personages en gebeurtenissen; deze worden gevormd door de categorieën in termen waarvan muziek beschreven kan worden: toonhoogte, toonduur, toonsterkte en timbre.

Semiosis of betekenisvorming is een speciale vorm van lezen. Net als bij lezen gaat de lezer een relatie aan met de tekst en kent er betekenis aan toe; het verschil met semiosis is dat in dit geval de verschillende stadia die de tekstlezer interactie doorloopt zo expliciet mogelijk worden weergegeven. De lezer

betreedt het leesproces voorzien van schemata, mentale encyclopedieën gevuld met kennis en ervaringen met betrekking tot de werkelijke wereld en fictieve werelden zoals deze in literaire teksten worden geschapen. Een belangrijk schema dat in het leesproces wordt aangewend is de narratieve macrostructuur, een schema dat de globale structuur beschrijft van narratieve teksten als de opera. Volgens dit schema hebben narratieve teksten een begin dat de personages en hun initiële situatie beschrijft, een middendeel dat verschillende gebeurtenissen beschrijft die vernaderingen aanbrengen in die beginsituatie, en een eind dat verslag doet van die veranderingen en van de reactie van de personages. Daar zowel libretto als muziek overwegend narratief van aard zijn in de opera, kan deze narratieve macrostructuur voor beide worden gebruikt. Hoofdstuk drie besluit met een opmerking over de mogelijkheden en onmogelijkheden van de lezer die van invloed zijn op semiosis.

De eerste drie hoofdstukken van dit boek banen de weg voor een semiotische operatheorie. Hoofdstukken vier tot en met zes beschrijven een concreet betekenisvormingsproces in verband met de opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* van Calzabigi en Gluck. In het laatste hoofdstuk, hoofdstuk zeven, worden enkele punten genoemd die uitgangspunt zouden kunnen zijn voor verder onderzoek naar de semiotische aspecten van opera. De semiotiek kan ons helpen om betekenisvormingsprocessen te verkennen, te beschrijven en te verklaren; zij verschaft ons een kader waarbinnen beschreven kan worden hoe mensen omgaan met tekens die zij tegenkomen in hun dagelijkse leven, verschijnselen die ons bestaan bepalen. Semiotiek beschrijft ons als betekenende en betekenisvolle individuen die hun identiteit ontlenen aan de omgang met tekens.

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How does op
of libretto and
move between the fields of musicology and literary theory. The semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce is used here as a guide that allows for a safe passage between these two disciplines. It is a method that transcends the disciplines of musicology and literary theory; it enables us to explore, to describe and to explain processes of signification in both libretto and music in the same way.

Each of the constituents of the operatic sign (libretto and music) contributes to the process of signification in its own way. We, the audience, are supposed to put the pieces together into a coherent reading of the opera. In this book, this process is first explored and subsequently applied to Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Its aim is to formulate some ideas which could serve as a basis for the foundation of a theoretical framework for further research into opera as a semiotic phenomenon.

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